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# GENDERED IMPACTS on Operational Effectiveness of UN Peace Operations





## The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security

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**Cover: UNIFIL’s Spanish peacekeepers on an evening foot patrol along the Blue Line at the outskirts of Kafar Kela, south Lebanon. 1 October 2019. / Photo by: Pasqual Gorriz/ UN; Page 4: UNIFIL Peacekeepers Patrol Local Market. / Photo by: UN Photo/Pasqual Gorriz; Page 6: MONUSCO Peacekeepers Support Orphanage in DRC. / Photo by: UN Photo/Michael Ali**

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# Executive Summary

**More than two decades ago**, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). Since then, the UN Security Council has strengthened the WPS Agenda through nine additional resolutions focusing on women's greater participation in peacebuilding, protection, prevention, and gender-responsive relief and recovery action.<sup>1</sup>

In 2008, as part of the WPS Agenda, the Security Council issued Resolution 1820 to explicitly call for peace operations to deploy more women. At the time, UN peacekeeping operations deployed virtually no women—only about 1.4 percent of total military personnel were women.<sup>2</sup> More than a dozen years later, in December 2020, 13 troop contributing countries (TCCs) still deployed zero women as part of their military troop contingents to UN peacekeeping operations.

The latest data for January 2021 show that in peacekeeping operations (PKOs), women are fewer than five percent of all military personnel, 11 percent of personnel in Formed Police Units (FPU), and 28 percent of individual police officers.<sup>3</sup>

Against this backdrop of slow progress, the UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO) put forward its Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy in 2018, setting targets for the next decade: by 2028 women should constitute 15 percent of deployed contingent troops, 30 percent of individual police officers, and 20 percent of formed police units. The same year, the UN DPO released its Gender Responsive UN Peacekeeping Policy, equating “operational effectiveness

and efficiency” with gender responsiveness.<sup>4</sup> The UN Secretary-General and the DPO have sought to support these efforts by issuing statements emphasizing that more women in peacekeeping results in more effective peacekeeping.<sup>5</sup>

This report affirms that women in uniform play important roles in PKOs. The report finds that across various missions, women's participation improves community engagement and changes the narrative of women's roles in society. Drawing on 78 extensive semi-structured interviews with UN PKO personnel and civil society activists (39 women and 39 men), this report highlights the differential gendered impacts of men and women in uniform. By gendered impacts, we mean the effects associated with men and women, including traits, behaviors, and practices perceived as masculine and feminine or related to other socially constructed ideas about the sexes.

Our report, based on 78 interviews and a comprehensive review of personnel data, strategy, policy, and standard operating procedure (SOP) documents related to operational effectiveness, shows that current concepts and assessments of operational effectiveness would benefit from engaging with the gendered dimensions of peacekeeping missions and local communities in which they operate.

**Part I** presents an overview of common definitions and measurements of operational effectiveness. It also provides three recommendations on how gender mainstreaming and the integration of local perspectives and priorities can improve operational effectiveness:





MONUSCO peacekeeper expresses her support for the fight against violence against women. / Photo by: MONUSCO / Myriam Asmani

**1. Comprehensive gendered conflict analysis.** Understanding local conceptions of gender roles and norms relating to masculinity and femininity is crucial for ensuring mission personnel engage with the right actors in the right way to protect civilians and foster peace.

**2. Comprehensive gendered organizational analysis.** PKOs are masculine institutions; the peacekeepers' assumed and idealized masculinity affects their interactions with local people and communities.<sup>6</sup> This report shows that to improve operational effectiveness, PKOs must engage in critical self-reflection and analysis of how militarized aggression among peacekeepers can harm interactions with beneficiaries.

**3. Systematic solicitation and integration of local input.** UN and independent assessments of the performance of peacekeeping operations must account for what affected communities want, need, or expect. By working with community and civil society organizations, PKOs can better accommodate diverse cultural contexts and work more effectually. Current definitions and assessments of peacekeeping effectiveness place a high priority on international actors whose visions often neglect local social and economic considerations.

**Part II** presents an overview of current UN approaches to data collection and analysis relating to operational effectiveness. It explores the Situational Awareness



Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE) system, the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS), and UN DPO's efforts to collect data on 15 core WPS indicators.

**Part III** draws on interviews with mission personnel from three ongoing UN PKOs in Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Lebanon, and civil society actors. It examines the gendered roles of uniformed peacekeepers, how they influence operational effectiveness in practice, and to what extent the missions' data collection and analyses are appropriate to support mission goals.

**Part IV** presents findings based on interviews and a comprehensive review of data collection policies and practices, leading to four key policy recommendations:

**1. Collect gender-disaggregated data on UN activities and operations more systematically.** The SAGE system does not require personnel to input data on the gender composition of teams performing a given activity. Standardizing gender-disaggregated data across both SAGE and CPAS would improve the protection of civilians (POC) and other mandated tasks. Accurately recording the number of women and men peacekeepers involved in an activity is the first and most basic step towards integrating a systematic gender lens in UN operations, which can then elucidate weaknesses and gaps to be addressed.

**2. Undertake a more systematic analysis of the qualitative gender data already available.** Reports from activities and patrols present an under-used source of information that could strengthen operational effectiveness. A gendered analysis of these reports presents an opportunity for peacekeeping missions to improve their engagement with local beneficiaries.

**3. Establish mechanisms for regular and systematic community input.** The communities where PKOs serve, and the people within them, have no official avenues to inform the performance evaluations of PKOs. Recent UN efforts, including CPAS, to integrate local perceptions through iterative processes are a step in the right direction. The next step is to make data collection and analysis efforts

more participatory to empower local beneficiaries to inform missions' strategies, activities, and performance indicators.

#### **4. Improve internal access to data and reporting.**

Access to data analysis reports is often limited to a select number of mission members. Additional data collection and analyses need to be accompanied by dissemination and information sharing among a wider distribution of mission personnel.

This report calls for policymakers and mission leadership to improve operational effectiveness in UN PKOs by committing more resources to implement gender mainstreaming initiatives. This includes data collection and analysis efforts.

As missions rely on more sophisticated data to assess their operational effectiveness, a gender lens is essential to providing an accurate analysis of how women and men in uniform impact operational effectiveness. Missions currently vary significantly in recording the gender composition of patrols, even though women's presence on patrols may increase the likelihood that women in a community approach or share information with peacekeepers. Assessing the operational effectiveness of uniformed women and men requires accurate data on who performs which responsibilities and tasks. The variation in how missions approach data collection, analysis, and reporting is an area where more direct policy guidance and accountability from UN DPO leadership could make a substantial difference.

Reforms in these directions would generate the type of gender-disaggregated data needed to further assess the differential impacts of both uniformed women and men in peacekeeping missions. This, in turn, could underpin advocacy for greater inclusion of women to meet the goals of UNSCR 1325 and UN DPO's goal of more effective peacekeeping through gender-responsive efforts.

# Methodology

We conducted case studies of the three ongoing UN PKOs in Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Lebanon. We chose these three missions because they differ on numerous points of interest, including the type of mission, mandate, security context, the share of women and men in uniform, and the role of women in mission leadership.

- At the time of the research, the **United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP)** had women in the top three leadership positions: Special Representative to the Secretary-General (Elizabeth Spehar), Force Commander (Major General Cheryl Pearce), and Senior Police Advisor (Chief Superintendent Fang Li), making it a critical case study to examine the potential effects on gender-responsive decision-making. In this mission, women constitute 13 percent of all uniformed personnel, most serving in the police force. The absence of active hostilities plays a vital role because troop and police-contributing countries are more comfortable sending women to “safe” missions.<sup>7</sup>
- In Lebanon, the **United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)**, established in 1978, is a traditional PKO tasked with monitoring the cessation of hostilities, overseeing the Blue Line, and assisting the Lebanese government and the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in securing its borders. UNIFIL consists of civilian and military personnel and is the largest traditional UN peacekeeping mission with about 10,500 peacekeepers. In 2006, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1701 tasking UNIFIL with a protection of civilians (POC) man-

date.<sup>8</sup> In UNIFIL, women make up six percent of the uniformed personnel.

- **The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO)** is the longest-serving multi-dimensional stabilization mission. The conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have repeatedly featured reports of explicitly gendered violence, such as widespread rape by armed actors.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, reports have singled out MONUSCO peacekeepers themselves to have perpetrated sexual abuse, making MONUSCO a PKO mission of critical importance in examining gendered impacts on operational effectiveness.<sup>10</sup> In MONUSCO, women make up six percent of uniformed personnel.

In addition to reviewing personnel data, strategy, policy, and standard operating procedure (SOP) documents related to operational effectiveness, we conducted 78 semi-structured interviews (30 to 60 minutes) via Zoom and Microsoft Teams between August 2020 and March 2021. Mission personnel included uniformed and civilian peacekeepers, as well as those working specifically on gender, members of the mining team in UNIFIL, members of the medical staff, patrol officers, police officers, civil affairs staffers, community liaison assistants, disciplinary officers, and cooks (see Table 1 for distribution of interviewees across the three missions). Members of civil society worked on gender equality, refugee aid, and restorative justice (see Table 2 for distribution across the three missions).

Interviewees were from the following 20 countries: Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Bosnia, Cambodia, Canada, Cyprus, DRC, Germany, India, Ireland, Lebanon, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Slovakia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Ukraine. Most interviews were conducted in English, but several interviewees used another member of their contingent to translate. A professional translator facilitated some of the interviews with civil society organizations in the DRC.

The Covid-19 pandemic restricted opportunities to interview local beneficiaries, who are critical stakeholders in discussions of PKO effectiveness. We address this challenge and its implications for this project and future research in **Part I** of this report. While Covid-19 restrictions prevented international travel and traditional fieldwork, this report consolidates existing information. It draws on original, extensive interviews with various stakeholders to make recommendations to shore up existing data gaps and more fully explore the gendered impacts on operational effectiveness in the future.

**TABLE 1. Distribution of Interviews Across UNFICYP, UNIFIL, and MONUSCO**

Mission Personnel			
	Men	Women	Total
UNFICYP	10	12	22
UNIFIL	7	10	17
MONUSCO	14	5	19
Total	31	27	58

This report draws on original, extensive interviews with various stakeholders to make recommendations to shore up existing data gaps and more fully explore the gendered impacts on operational effectiveness.

**TABLE 2. Distribution of Interviews with Members of Civil Society Organizations**

Civil Society Organization Members			
	Men	Women	Total
Cyprus	1	8	9
Lebanon	1	1	2
DRC	6	3	9
Total	8	12	20



# Part I: Defining and assessing operational effectiveness

**Quantitative studies have concluded** that UN PKOs are effective because they reduce lethal violence between opposing conflict sides and prevent the killing of civilians.<sup>11</sup> However, many of these studies do not provide an explicit definition of operational effectiveness and instead evaluate effectiveness based on post-hoc validity of having observed a reduction of lethal violence. Research by Jessica Di Salvatore, for example, examines the conditions under which peacekeeping missions are effective at reducing one-sided violence but does not explicitly state or claim that violence reduction is a necessary or sufficient achievement for overall operational effectiveness.<sup>12</sup>

By concentrating solely on the issue of lethal violence, the evaluative focus tends to be on men who are assumed to be natural combatants and are also frequently targeted in one-sided violence against civilians.<sup>13</sup> While one-sided violence against civilians includes women and children, studies examining PKOs do not disaggregate data of civilian victims based on sex. Consequently, studies to date have tended to neglect the diverse and disparate harms different population groups experience.

Recent studies have started to examine the effectiveness of PKOs in reducing conflict-related sexual violence, with mixed findings.<sup>14</sup> Media reports and qualitative studies also show PKOs have failed to protect local populations, even exploiting and harming them in often profoundly gendered ways.<sup>15</sup> Below we briefly review critical themes in the literature on PKOs' effectiveness. Our reviews of academic and practitioner approaches to defining and measuring operational effectiveness

underscores the difficulty of defining, operationalizing, and identifying it. We find that focusing on lethal violence neglects critical gendered dimensions of PKOs in the field. The section concludes with recommendations on how to conceive of, frame, measure, and operationalize the evaluation of operational effectiveness to forge a more comprehensive and accurate assessment of peacekeeping activities and impacts.

## **Reduction of battle-related deaths**

The UN deploys traditional and multi-dimensional stabilization PKOs to manage a range of complex crises. The UN does not task traditional missions with playing a direct role in political conflict resolution efforts. The UN deploys these forces as an interim measure to help manage the conflict and prevent a re-escalation of lethal violence between opposing sides. The 2008 UN capstone doctrine outlines three key tasks for traditional missions such as UNIFIL and UNFICYP:

- Observation, monitoring and reporting through static posts, patrols, flights, and other technical means.
- Supervision of ceasefires and support of verification mechanism.
- Interposition as a buffer and confidence-building measure.<sup>16</sup>

The UN typically sends its multidimensional mission forces, such as MONUSCO, to backstop local and regional security forces following an internal conflict in which armed conflict diminished the host state's capac-

ity to provide security to its population. These missions are part of broader international efforts to support countries recovering from conflict. Core functions include:

- Create a secure and stable environment.
- Strengthen the host state's capacity to provide security.
- Facilitate political process.
- Promote dialogue and reconciliation.
- Support the establishment of legitimate and effective institutions of governance.
- Provide a framework under which all UN and other international actors coordinate activities in the host country.

Military components constitute the largest part of PKOs, and studies of PKO effectiveness, particularly quantitative research, have focused on their impact on reducing battle-related deaths. In this view, PKOs' role is to reduce or terminate battlefield violence, thereby achieving a "negative peace."<sup>17</sup> The UN, PKO commanders, and many scholars tend to view the most critical metric in this category to be reductions in the number of casualties resulting from the fighting between the opposing sides.<sup>18</sup>

Other authors measure effectiveness based on whether violence was reduced below a certain threshold during the mission<sup>19</sup>, or the duration of time for which lethal violence remained below these thresholds.<sup>20</sup> Recent research has disaggregated PKO data to the sub-national level illustrating that the deployment of military contingents to conflict-prone locations shortens the duration of conflict episodes.<sup>21</sup>

The UN and member states measure and charge PKOs with the fundamental responsibility of reducing and preventing battle-related deaths. However, a few factors trouble these lethality-based assessments. One, they suggest that all PKOs operate in a context of active hostilities and heightened insecurities in which reduction of lethal violence is the best available measure. This

is misleading because a range of long-standing peacekeeping missions are relatively violence-free, such as the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) and the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). Even more relevant variables, such as the recurrence of active hostilities, may prove unsuitable in contexts that have not experienced that kind of violence in decades. Thus, quantitative studies of peacekeeping effectiveness might benefit from carefully selecting cases based on the nature of different operational environments.

### Reduction of civilian victimization

Over the last 20 years, the protection of civilians (POC) has become a key priority for UN PKOs. As of February 2021, there are 12 PKOs, of which six have a POC mandate.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, researchers have sought to measure PKO effectiveness in terms of protecting civilian populations from harm, typically using the number of civilian casualties.<sup>23</sup>

We argue that using battle-related or civilian deaths to assess effectiveness is problematic.

We argue that using battle-related or civilian deaths to assess effectiveness is problematic. This holds true even at the local or sector-level because military contingents that are often credited for these improvements (or blamed for deteriorations) do not exist in isolation, and the PKOs themselves do not exist in a vacuum.<sup>24</sup> Put differently, it is difficult to establish what role external factors play, what role the mission plays, which parts of the mission are



**UNIFIL peacekeepers from the Mission's Female Assessment/Analysis and Support Team (FAST) carry out a community engagement walk. / Photo by: Pasqual Gorriz/UN**

having an impact, which impact, and why.<sup>25</sup> Scholars are aware of and seek to address the potential endogeneity concerns, but given the vast number of confounding variables and data limitations, this remains a challenge.

Until recently, observers and scholars have paid less attention to more explicitly gendered forms of civilian victimization by conflict actors or peacekeepers in assessing operational effectiveness. For example, the UN DPO's Gender Responsive UN Peacekeeping Policy does not provide explicit guidance on conflict-related sexual violence, sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, and sexual and gender-based violence. The policy instead points to complementary,

specific policies and guidelines for each issue.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the 2020 Handbook for UN Field Missions on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence does not address sexual exploitation and abuse by male peacekeepers, treating them as unrelated phenomena.<sup>27</sup> One consequence of this separate treatment: assessments of PKO effectiveness largely neglect sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated by peacekeepers.<sup>28</sup> While specific policy documents for each type of violence are important, they do not negate the need for a holistic gender-sensitive policy that addresses underlying causes.

Overall, the UN Security Council has been more responsive to conflict-related sexual violence. The Se-



curity Council has done more to highlight critical issues in POC and gender-responsive peacekeeping since 2000.<sup>29</sup> UN DPO also has made progress. For example, the Gender Responsive UN Peacekeeping Policy requires a gender-responsive conflict analysis to inform all planning processes.<sup>30</sup> In 2020, UN DPO also published a comprehensive resource package on “Gender Equality and Women, Peace and Security” that gives guidance on how to conduct such a gender-responsive analysis.<sup>31</sup>

However, UN PKOs continue to vary significantly in how well they integrate gender in their POC efforts. The recently concluded UN-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) was lauded for its gender mainstreaming efforts, including the recognition of male victims of conflict-related sexual violence.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), established in 2011, has been criticized for inadequate gender mainstreaming. Despite its establishment 11 years after the adoption of UNSCR 1325, the original mandate did not refer to women, peace, and security, thereby limiting the probability gender will be considered in practice. UNISFA’s latest mandate (renewed through UNSCR 2550) refers to gender only in the context of sexual and gender-based violence against women and children, while UNISFA does not consider other threats to men, women, boys, and girls from a gendered perspective.<sup>33</sup>

While mandating women’s protection against sexual and gender-based violence is crucial, there is often a gap between what is written into mission mandates and what is carried out on the ground. A promising mandate does not guarantee sufficient mainstreaming on the ground. This truth also helps explain why research finds mixed results regarding PKOs’ effectiveness in reducing and preventing conflict-related sexual violence.<sup>34</sup>

The case of UNISFA illustrates fundamental shortcomings relating to the gendered dimensions of operational effectiveness: neither UN policies on POC nor UN policies on gender-responsive peacekeeping address the gendered dimensions of POC adequately.<sup>35</sup> Despite guiding documents from UN DPO, the majority of missions do not conduct a structured

gender analysis of threats. When they do, it is often focused on sexual and gender-based violence against women while gendered threats against men, boys, and girls receive far less attention.<sup>36</sup> While specific policies addressing women’s vulnerabilities are important, there remain two key steps to ensure progress. First, the UN must mainstream gender-responsive analysis across all policies and guiding documents; and second, implement gendered conflict and threat analyses across all missions.

### Operational efficiency

Operational efficiency relates to a PKO’s ability to meet its mandate, or ‘task completion.’<sup>37</sup> Various academic studies adopt this approach. For example, de Coning and Brusset define effectiveness as the “degree to which outcomes achieved match intended specific objectives.”<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Lise Howard assesses UN PKO success in relation to mandate performance, or the extent to which the operation fulfilled mandated tasks, and whether the mission strengthened the host country’s institutional capacities.<sup>39</sup> Duane Bratt’s definition of effectiveness incorporates mandates as well. While Bratt concedes that a mission’s mandate can be politically contrived or unrealistic, it “cannot be ignored—for it does represent the wishes of the Security Council.”<sup>40</sup>

In practice, performance evaluations of PKOs conducted by the UN tend to measure effectiveness against mandate fulfillment. The Office of Internal Oversight’s 2017 evaluation of the effectiveness of MONUSCO, MINUSCA, and MINUSMA considered three elements: mandate operationalization, mandate performance, and “factors affecting performance,” such as the role of senior leadership and the mission’s relationship with the host government.<sup>41</sup>

While it appears reasonable to evaluate effectiveness based on mission mandates, these documents are often vague, resulting in different interpretations and uneven implementation efforts.<sup>42</sup> For instance, in UNIFIL’s mandate the lack of explicit WPS language constrained the head of mission in taking the WPS Agenda forward.<sup>43</sup> In Rwanda, ambiguities about the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission

## In deployed PKOs, existing protocols place the burden for implementing gender-responsive policies on gender affairs personnel and upper-level leadership without the necessary financial and institutional support.

for Rwanda (UNAMIR) had deadly consequences.<sup>44</sup> In 2009, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support (now DPO) noted a “lack of consensus on the role of UN peacekeeping and on how peacekeepers should implement the tasks that they are assigned.”<sup>45</sup> The lack of coordination and cohesion in operational activities within and across missions impedes mandate execution and renders assessments of effectiveness difficult.

The inherent ambiguity that results from the context, size, and nature of PKOs has become a vital issue in assessing PKO effectiveness. Although UN DPO, individual PKOs, their respective bureaucracies, and individual mission members rely on policies and SOP, they frequently have limited conceptions of how these activities impact the larger goal of the mission.<sup>46</sup> It is challenging to identify a causal relationship between a given operational activity and a given observed outcome, one member of MONUSCO confirmed to us.<sup>47</sup>

Assessing operational effectiveness is not just difficult, but mission leadership also has incentives to focus on completing tasks rather than their impacts. One of the reasons is the UN’s approach of results-based budgeting (RBB). Missions are interested in maintaining or increasing their budgets. Therefore they need to demonstrate the number of patrols conducted or the number of flight hours performed. RBB also cre-

ates powerful incentives for mission leaders to make a priority of task completion. Assessing performed activities against intended and achieved outcomes is time-consuming and potentially dangerous to missions because failing to meet its goals could provide support for those wanting to cut PKOs’ budgets.<sup>48</sup> The Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS) seeks to unskew these incentives by enabling mission leadership to identify and assess the impact of operational activities.<sup>49</sup>

### Politics and people-centered approaches

The Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) recognized that reviews of PKO effectiveness based on lethality or task completion are incomplete. In response, it established an international expert network: The Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON) to evaluate mission effectiveness in terms of task completion and impacts on domestic political and security dynamics. EPON lists six factors contributing to an effective mission, namely:

- Political primacy, or mission support for the domestic political process;
- Mandates and resources;
- People-centered approaches, or the mission’s concrete impacts on individuals and communities;
- Legitimacy and credibility;
- Coordination and coherence;
- Women, peace and security.

Academic literature too often neglects these six factors, especially those centered around women and local communities, which are consistent with the push for greater inclusiveness and gender-responsive peacekeeping in UN peace operations. MINUSCA, for example, has worked with 29 local peace and reconciliation committees throughout the Central African Republic (CAR), and has deployed more uniformed women proportionally than any other current UN PKO.<sup>50</sup> MONUSCO has also enhanced its capillary



**UNIFIL Ghanaian peacekeepers donated pediatric medications, hand sanitizers, disinfectants, and personal protective equipment to Ayta Ash Shaab Social Development Centre and Beit Leif Community Clinic in southwestern Lebanon. Beit Leif, south Lebanon. 14 April 2020. / Photo by: Pasqual Gorriz (UN)**

reach in the DRC by “backing inclusive local mechanisms for dialogue and consensus”<sup>51</sup> and establishing community alert networks (CANs), which allow remote communities to alert MONUSCO of local threats.

Meanwhile, EPON has found that MINUSMA, which has sustained higher rates of fatalities from violent attacks than its counterparts in the DRC and the CAR, has a severe “community outreach gap,” resulting from the highly insecure operating environment and topographical barriers.<sup>52</sup> In Mali, Islamist extremist groups have gone so far as to draw up ‘death lists’ of UN informants.<sup>53</sup> This gap could be a critical factor contributing to the mission’s inability to predict and prevent attacks in 2018, 2019, and 2020 (i.e., due to poor communication with or legitimacy amongst local communities)

and the frequency of the attacks themselves (i.e., due to local hostility towards the mission).

EPON’s approach recognizes the necessity of local buy-in, including among women and other marginalized groups, in determining mandate fulfillment and broader mission success. It is notable that quantitative academic assessments have largely neglected these local and gender consideration. In contrast, recent practical efforts of evaluating PKO effectiveness strive to be more inclusive, highlighting a crucial scholar-practitioner gap.

### Ways forward

Gender is an integral part of all UN operational activities. Gender influences interactions among PKO



members, uniformed peacekeepers, local officials, and peacekeepers and local beneficiaries. This report finds definitions and assessments of operational effectiveness would benefit from engaging with and then understanding how gender underlies different types of violence, PKOs, and the local context. That is why gender mainstreaming and integrating local perspectives and priorities are crucial to improving operational effectiveness. Below we provide recommendations on how to take this forward:

- **Comprehensive gendered conflict analysis.** It is essential for engaging with the right actors in the right way that mission personnel understand local conceptions of gender roles and norms relating to masculinity and femininity. Both local women and men can provide intelligence, cooperate with PKO personnel and directives, mobilize at the grassroots level for peace, or refuse to engage in any of these activities.<sup>54</sup> Different forms of violence, including kidnappings, killings, and rapes, impact women, men, trans, and non-binary identifying people differently, especially when further considering dimensions of race, ethnicity, and class. Assessments of operational effectiveness should account for and reflect the diverging gendered risks and vulnerabilities. UN DPO policy documents have started to acknowledge this. In deployed PKOs, existing protocols place the burden for implementing gender-responsive policies on gender affairs personnel and upper-level leadership without the necessary financial and institutional support. The tendency to relegate gender considerations to specialized units and to leave implementation efforts up to leadership's discretion impedes the transformative potential of comprehensive gender mainstreaming.<sup>55</sup> It also signals that gender continues to be thought of not as an inherently important dimension of peacekeeping but as an "added" element that can be compartmentalized, i.e., not a priority.<sup>56</sup> Gendered conflict analysis is a crucial step to ensure the operational effectiveness of missions.
- **Comprehensive gendered organizational analysis.** PKOs are masculine institutions, and the assumed and idealized masculinity of peacekeepers affects interactions with local beneficiaries.<sup>57</sup> Because they operate within predominantly masculinized institutions, military and police personnel tend to adopt gendered ways of conceptualizing and actualizing their work, which privilege 'masculine' traits such as aggression and decisiveness over 'feminine' traits such as patience or compassion. Yet, uniformed personnel interviewed for this project reported that communication was the most important skill in their work. Assessments of operational effectiveness should include an analysis of the gendered dimensions of PKOs and their interactions with local beneficiaries.
- **Local input.** Assessing effectiveness should account for what affected communities want, need, or expect of PKOs. By working with the local community and civil society organizations, PKOs could better accommodate diverse cultural contexts and work more effectively in the community. Current definitions and assessments of peacekeeping effectiveness place a priority upon international actors whose visions often omit locally salient social and economic considerations. They are based on what outsiders, frequently scholars, practitioners, policymakers from the Global North, believe to be most important.<sup>58</sup> Analysts and PKO leadership tend to consider local perceptions of PKOs only as far as they affect mission mobility and access to information;<sup>59</sup> their capacity to reflect local satisfaction is secondary. In recognition of this, the 2015 UN High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) specified more field-focused and people-centered approaches as one of four essential shifts, along with prioritizing political solutions, adapting by using a full spectrum of tools, and engaging in more inclusive partnerships with Member States and organizations.<sup>60</sup> The Panel emphasized the shift from consultation with the local population to actively including them into the mission's work, in order to better respond to the population's needs and monitor the mission's impact. Community-level conflict resolution tactics led by the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (concluded in 2017) and recently in MINUSCA, suggest that PKOs are beginning to heed the call. The shift contributed to reducing inter-communal violence.<sup>61</sup>

# Part II: Existing UN data collection and analysis efforts

**The complexity and size** of PKOs, changes in rotations and composition of missions, the ambiguity of the local context and conflict, and the uncertain relationship between organizational activities and outcomes all mean that assessing operational effectiveness is complicated. It follows that isolating the impacts of a small minority of uniformed women spread across multiple contingents in different roles with differing responsibilities is inherently even more difficult.

UN PKOs' recent efforts towards more systematic data collection and analysis could enable missions to start identifying causal relationships between operational activities and outcomes and contingent composition and their operational impact. The collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data and a gendered analysis of peacekeepers' interactions with local beneficiaries could inform discussions of operational effectiveness.

## **Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE)**

Since 2018, the UN has deployed new tools for recording conflict and peacekeeping data and assessing mission performance, to inform senior leadership's operational decisions and identify key conflict drivers and actors. The main tool is the Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE) system, which allows mission personnel at the field office level or higher to record violent events and incidents in a structured data format, including indicators like the number of victims, the sex and ethnicity of victims and perpetrators, and location coordinates.<sup>62</sup> Joint Operations Center (JOC)

personnel in coordination and consultation with other mission members identify possible categories of incidents and create the drop-down options in the system. These categories of incidents vary per the local context of each mission and are subject to change corresponding to the evolving mission environment. While this allows missions to adapt data collection to changes in the operational environment, it complicates cross-mission and long-term data analysis.

The SAGE system offers incident report forms, activity forms, human rights reports, and early warning alert forms for personnel to record and share relevant data. After an incident is reported, a subject matter expert in the mission is tasked with its verification. The data input in SAGE should be accessible to JOC and Joint Military Analysis (JMAC) personnel across mission elements, reducing information silos. In MONUSCO, some of these forms, including incident reports and gender affairs activity forms, include questions to capture the sex of impacted beneficiaries. Others do not, such as the Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Reintegration, and Resettlement (DDR/RR) activity form. The lack of comprehensive gender-disaggregated data conceals potentially critical conflict patterns and undermines the system's predictive potential. Additionally, the SAGE system is not accessible to all mission personnel. The JOC allocates access, and often only to the JMAC, mission leadership, and select uniformed personnel.

Missions vary in how fast and comprehensively they have implemented the SAGE system. Before the development of SAGE, UNIFIL had developed its situa-

tional awareness tool that caters to Lebanon's unique political and conflict dynamics. Because the tool has been refined and tailored over more than a decade, it captures more detailed data on mission activities than SAGE, including the gender and nationality breakdown of patrols.<sup>63</sup> That is why UNIFIL has not transitioned to the SAGE system. This essential lesson for missions as they advance data-based peacekeeping shows that missions will derive more value from SAGE by tailoring data inputs to their operational context. Systematically collecting and analyzing the gendered dimensions of data are critical.

### **Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS)**

In August 2018, the UN rolled out its Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS). This integrated performance assessment tool is designed to consolidate data on conflict contexts, assess mission output and outcomes against desired impacts, and produce recommendations for improved mission performance. By design, CPAS is highly iterative with a constant data collection, analysis, and adjustment cycle.<sup>64</sup> As such, a mission changes indicators and measured outputs regularly to reflect the changes in the security context and mission priorities. Missions select outputs based on a scoring system that assesses the relevance of the output to the desired outcome, and the extent and duration of its impact on the target population. For example, mission personnel could assess the relevance of one input: police trainings, to the desired outcome: crime reduction in a specific locality. If the mission leaders deem the output to be relevant to the outcome, the mission would then estimate the extent of police trainings' impact on levels of criminality and the duration of that impact.<sup>65</sup>

What constitutes a 'desired impact' is mainly at the discretion of mission leaders, who craft priority objectives based on the mission's mandate and corresponding overarching strategic objectives.<sup>66</sup> Local populations have no direct channels where they are invited to inform how the mission is conceived or how effectiveness is measured and evaluated in CPAS. Uniformed personnel on the ground recognized these shortcomings too:

"I would say the feedback from the local population, from women and girls, there should be action on that, and maybe there are constraints, but we are unable to get that sometimes. I would wish that feedback from them would be required."<sup>67</sup>

CPAS is a step towards an integrated and comprehensive assessment of mission performance. However, it does not foster a culture of accountability among mission personnel because individual mission members see objectives as diffuse and aspirational goals and not their responsibility.<sup>68</sup>

There is also a risk of biased reporting. This can be a severe problem for crimes and conflict incidents that are known to be systematically under-reported, namely, violence against civilians and conflict-related sexual violence.<sup>69</sup> Studies have already uncovered bias in UN data: the peacekeeping mission in Darfur, for example, was more likely to collect data on violence occurring in proximity to its base.<sup>70</sup> Insufficient data literacy on the part of mission personnel, risks related to data privacy and confidentiality, and sensitivities related to data gathering and reporting are other challenges that data-based systems such as SAGE and CPAS have to contend with.<sup>71</sup>

While not perfect, SAGE and CPAS are promising new tools that can break down information silos within missions, contribute to better-informed, more holistic analyses of the operational environment and peacekeeping activities, and improve missions' abilities to predict and respond to incidents. Both systems also provide an opportunity for mission leadership to apply a gender lens to its data collection and analysis across sectors and levels. The current paucity of gender-disaggregated data relating to UN personnel, particularly women in uniform, hampers a mission's ability to comprehensively assess its impact. SAGE and CPAS can play important roles in addressing these gaps.

### **WPS indicators**

Nine of the 12 active UN peacekeeping missions include explicit references to the WPS Agenda in their mandates.<sup>72</sup> The 2015 High-Level Independent Panel



**TABLE 3. UN DPO 15 Core WPS Indicators**

WPS Pillar 1 (Prevention)
<p># and % of formal local early warning mechanisms where women make up at least 30% of active members in area of responsibility (AOR).</p> <p># of reported GBV incidents disaggregated by sex. (Possible data source: MARA, UNPOL, UNJHRO, SAGE)</p> <p># of mission-led (meaning: time or financial resources committed) initiatives that are aimed at strengthening the capacities of women's civil society organizations working on conflict prevention.</p>
WPS Pillar 2 (Participation)
<p>% of women in elective political positions across the area of responsibility (AOR). (Possible data source: SAGE)</p> <p>% of women participating in peace negotiations in the (a) overall AOR and the (b) local level.</p> <p>% and # of women in ministerial positions.</p>
WPS Pillar 3 (Protection)
<p>% of women prisoners staying at separate prisons with the necessary facilities. (Possible data source: Justice and Corrections Service)</p> <p># of gender responsive operations by the UN military, or alternatively "Female Engagement Teams," carried out to protect civilians.</p> <p># of gender responsive operations by UNPOL carried out to protect civilians.</p>
Cross-Cutting
<p>% of mission planning frameworks (meaning: this includes work plans, mission concept notes, section operational guidelines, and RBBs) informed by a gender analysis and/or gender conflict analysis.</p> <p># of Gender Technical Taskforce, or alternatively Mission Leadership Team, meetings held in the past 1 year.</p> <p>% of unit work plans, including field offices, across entire mission that include at least one goal that addresses gender-specific needs of population.</p> <p>% and # of QIPS-funded activities targeting gender equality and/or WPS.</p> <p>% and # of mission-funded programmatic activities targeting gender equality and/or WPS.</p> <p>% of participants with gender expertise in strategic reviews and/or assessment missions undertaken the previous year.</p>

Source: UN Department of Peace Operations

on Peace Operations (HIPPO) report emphasized three WPS commitments that heads of mission and the Secretary-General should incorporate in their compact:

- Promoting gender mainstreaming across all mandated tasks;
- Encouraging national leaders to take ownership of the Women, Peace and Security agenda;
- Increasing gender parity amongst staff.<sup>73</sup>

Since the 2015 HIPPO report, UN DPO has developed 15 core WPS indicators designed to inform assessments of mission effectiveness (see Table 3). Data collection varies from mission to mission because missions only collect data on WPS indicators relevant to their mission mandate. For example, UNIFIL does not have any UN police personnel (UNPOL) and cannot collect data on the number of gender-responsive operations carried out by UNPOL. However, some of the data – like the number of Gender Technical Taskforce, or alternatively Mission Leadership Team, meetings held in the past 12 months – should be available for all missions. In some cases, the variation between missions also means missions collect more data than the 15 core WPS indicators.

For example, in addition to the 15 core DPO WPS indicators, MONUSCO internally gathers information on 10 other indicators related to gender.<sup>74</sup>

The WPS indicators are intended to inform CPAS. However, the extent to which that occurs also varies from mission to mission. An influential factor is how mission leadership originally set up CPAS and to what extent gender advisors were involved.<sup>75</sup> In UNIFIL, mission leadership and senior gender advisors made a concerted effort to integrate a gender lens when establishing CPAS. In contrast, in MONUSCO the senior gender advisor position has been vacant for years, hampering gender mainstreaming efforts including when introducing CPAS.<sup>76</sup> This highlights the importance of including gender experts and presents a crucial lesson: gender mainstreaming is most effective if undertaken from the beginning.

The variation in how missions approach data collection, analysis, and reporting is one key area where more direct policy guidance from UN DPO leadership could make a meaningful difference. For example, UN DPO could institute a policy to require all missions to collect and report information on the composition of police and military patrols, including translators and community liaison assistants (CLAs).



UNFICYP military and police personnel join calls for an end to violence against women and girls in December 2015. /  
Photo by: UNFICYP/Juraj Hladky

# Part III: Gendered impacts on operational effectiveness

## Context, gendered roles and behavior

In the security sector, institutional practices privilege militarized and masculine behaviors and actors that embody this ideal over others, placing women at a disadvantage.<sup>77</sup> This fact applies to PKOs, in which gender is a fundamental organizing principle, meaning PKOs are “defined, conceptualized, and structured in terms of a distinction between masculinity and femininity.”<sup>78</sup> Put differently, the emphasis on the role of military contingents in PKOs contributes to the gendering of the institution by prioritizing a masculinized warrior identity.<sup>79</sup> The composition of military contingents are 95 percent men, with a small number of women in senior leadership roles, and reports of pervasive sexual harassment of women in and outside of missions.<sup>80</sup>

Operational outcomes rely heavily on the actions and behaviors of the personnel on the ground. Uniformed troops and police officers are the most visible members of the mission and frequently interact with local beneficiaries. How the uniformed personnel perceive locals shapes how they interact with them and vice versa.<sup>81</sup> This is both gendered and racialized. For example, a UNIFIL peacekeeper who had previously served in MINUSCA spoke in racist terms about people in the Central African Republic, claiming, “most people are not as developed.”<sup>82</sup>

Kathleen Jennings has shown that some peacekeepers construe themselves as superior outsiders rescuing the feminized local.<sup>83</sup> Local beneficiaries understand this. As a civil society activist in the DRC told us: “The local men are considered weak by the military man peacekeepers.”<sup>84</sup> Such attitudes by

male peacekeepers reflect the prevailing idealization of a militarized masculinity, which negatively affects interactions with locals. However, as men constitute 95 percent of military troops, the idealized warrior masculinity is considered normal and rarely questioned within missions. Further, neither individual peacekeepers nor mission leadership reflect on how this idealized masculinity shapes peacekeepers’ perceptions of and interactions with beneficiaries. The mission does not assess the gendered impacts of the prevailing warrior masculinity and how it impedes operational effectiveness by hampering community engagement.

Insecurity, especially in the context of multidimensional stabilization missions such as MONUSCO, means that local beneficiaries often value masculinized, forceful responses by peacekeepers.<sup>85</sup> In the DRC, for example, locals appreciate the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB), which is empowered to launch rapid-response offensive operations against armed groups, more highly than regular MONUSCO peacekeepers precisely because of residents perceived it as offering ‘real’ protection.<sup>86</sup> A key complaint among local members of civil society was MONUSCO’s alleged tendency to observe instead of intervening, and their inefficient chain of command when violent incidents did emerge.<sup>87</sup> For this reason, some locals appreciate the aggression and decisiveness of the FIB.<sup>88</sup>

## Men’s misconduct

The FIB’s more aggressive posture is not limited to engagements with armed groups. Corroborating past



## An important first step would be to integrate sexual exploitation and abuse incidents into the SAGE system.

reports of sexual exploitation and abuse by members of the FIB,<sup>89</sup> a CLA said there were more allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by FIB personnel than for regular MONUSCO peacekeepers. Nonetheless, according to the CLA, local communities considered the FIB more effective.<sup>90</sup>

Since reports of sexual exploitation first emerged in the UN mission to Cambodia in 1993, peacekeepers in all missions have perpetrated some level of sexual exploitation and abuse.<sup>91</sup> In Liberia, a team of scholars estimated that about 58,000 women engaged in transactional sex with UN personnel.<sup>92</sup> In academic literature and UN reports, peacekeeper-perpetrated sexual exploitation and abuse are primarily acknowledged as infringements on human rights and seldom as an impediment to operational effectiveness.<sup>93</sup>

The UN recognizes that the effectiveness of a mission is tied to its credibility.<sup>94</sup> Since 2016, the UN through the Secretary General's reports on peacekeeping missions, has included progress reports tracking sexual exploitation and abuse rates by peacekeeping personnel. Similarly, EPON includes sexual exploitation and abuse as part of its WPS dimension.<sup>95</sup> Despite this progress, there are shortcomings in UN data collection on sexual exploitation and abuse.<sup>96</sup> In terms of assessing sexual exploitation and abuse impact on operational effectiveness, an important first step would be to integrate sexual exploitation and abuse incidents into the SAGE system.

The prevalence of sexual exploitation and abuse across missions suggests that the missions, T/PCCs, and the UN DPO need to integrate its zero-tolerance policy in assessments of operational effectiveness. It is important to highlight that sexual exploitation and abuse

are explicitly gendered issues that expose the broader problem of PKOs' lack of attention to gender. Lack of attention to gender limits missions' understanding of operational effectiveness in numerous ways beyond sexual exploitation and abuse, which missions primarily treat as a conduct and discipline issue.

### Women's impact

While identifying the impact of a small minority of uniformed women spread across multiple contingents in different roles with differing responsibilities is extremely difficult, some researchers have presented evidence suggesting women make a distinct impact. A March 2020 survey of military, police, and civilian peacekeeping personnel and select experts shows that women peacekeepers are widely seen as boosting operational effectiveness along several dimensions. At least 80 percent of respondents agreed, for example, that women's participation contributes to a better situational understanding of conflict contexts, higher reporting of SGBV, improved intelligence gathering, better local legitimacy, increased civilian outreach, a greater focus on GBV, and enhanced gender equality in the host country.<sup>97</sup>

The UN has repeatedly argued for the inclusion of women in uniform to improve PKOs' effectiveness in intelligence gathering, local outreach, and protection responses.<sup>98</sup> Some of this has been explicitly gendered, for example, drawing on gendered stereotypes that women peacekeepers contribute to greater mission effectiveness because of their supposedly pacific or empathetic, i.e., feminine, behavior. A UNIFIL contingent commander exemplified this thinking when sharing that when he wants to project a "softer" posture, usually in direct engagements with local beneficiaries, he ensures that women are part of the patrol.<sup>99</sup>

Previous research suggests that women peacekeepers can access social spaces and situations that men cannot, thus improving mission coverage and security. Examples include conducting women body searches, screening women combatants during DDR processes,<sup>100</sup> and communicating with local women in societies that restrict contact between men and women.<sup>101</sup> However, it should be noted that the converse



**MONUSCO Urubatt armored vehicles patrolling streets of Goma for civil protection, the 13th of July 2012 . /**  
**Photo by: MONUSCO/Sylvain Liechti**

is also true, as male peacekeepers can conduct male body searches and communicate with men who would not confide in a woman.

Many uniformed men reported that they saw their female colleagues as key to operational effectiveness. In Lebanon, the presence of women peacekeepers on patrols improved the host community's perception of the mission. Village residents would emerge and interact with peacekeeping patrols if women peacekeepers were present, whereas all-men patrols would elicit little response from locals. As such, women's inclusion leads to a "friendlier" operating environment.<sup>102</sup> Women were also seen as calmer, more patient, more compassionate, and more rational soldiers and were, therefore, more effective during tense confrontations with locals.<sup>103</sup>

This is a common argument in support of uniformed women. Local women reportedly tend to be more comfortable interacting with women peacekeepers than their male counterparts. In Liberia, for example, reports showed that the all-female Formed Police Unit (FFPU) increased the rate of reported sexual violence<sup>104</sup> and improved the overall perception of local security.<sup>105</sup> In line with this, personnel from both MONUSCO and UNIFIL emphasized the important role women in uniform played in community outreach efforts. Both men and women highlighted uniformed women's impact as part of mixed and female engagement teams and their importance for interacting with local women and girls to build trust with local communities.<sup>106</sup> It is also important to highlight that deployed uniformed personnel, both men and women, report that the most essential

skills for operational effectiveness are communication skills and not inherently gendered.<sup>107</sup>

In other cases, such as in an IDP camp in Darfur, women felt more comfortable discussing sexual harassment and assault with women peacekeepers than their men counterparts. This information directly changed operational behavior. PKO commanders adjusted patrol routes and schedules to areas and times when women reported higher frequencies of harassment and assault. These targeted patrol shifts increased security and improved locals' perception of safety.<sup>108</sup> MONUSCO personnel reported similar patterns of increased reporting from women to women peacekeepers, which resulted in information from local women shaping POC strategies.<sup>109</sup>

Women peacekeepers can serve as role models, including for local women. Women peacekeepers have changed community perceptions of what jobs men and women should perform and whether they can work together, as happened in East Timor<sup>110</sup> and Liberia.<sup>111</sup> Several members of the UNIFIL mission emphasized this impact of uniformed women, saying, "Local women will also see that women can be in the army."<sup>112</sup>

Several respondents associated with the UN mission in Cyprus and Cypriot civil society felt that Force Commander Cheryl Pearce and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Elizabeth Spehar had an outsized impact on the direction and public perception of the mission. Several interviewees credited Spehar with advancing the WPS agenda in Cyprus, particularly by empowering and working with women-led CSOs. Major General Pearce is said to have 'changed the narrative' about women's roles on the island, normalizing their participation in the military and other sectors traditionally exclusive to men.

### Mitigating masculine missteps

Some have sought to connect women's presence in peacekeeping missions with lower rates of misconduct perpetrated by male peacekeepers. Research has suggested that women's inclusion in missions puts "new items on the agenda," including men's sexual misconduct.<sup>113</sup> A civil society leader in the DRC shared details

to support such claims: A woman police officer from Senegal was proactive in investigating and prosecuting cases of sexual abuse, unlike former men officers. The result was a temporary decrease in the level of sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated by peacekeepers.<sup>114</sup>

Others have claimed that higher proportions of women reduce rates of sexual misconduct.<sup>115</sup> Evidence shows that including a higher proportion of women peacekeepers is associated with lower levels of sexual exploitation and abuse allegations reported against military personnel.<sup>116</sup>

There are two potential mechanisms for this effect: either women deter men's bad behavior through their presence or through active policing, or higher proportions of women in missions reduce overall rates of sexual misconduct because women are less likely to perpetrate sexual exploitation and abuse. The former argument, in particular, has been met with more skepticism than support in contemporary scholarship.<sup>117</sup> However, uniformed men across the three missions freely admitted that they believe they behave better when women in uniform are part of the battalion. This indicates a lack of professionalism by men and adds an extra burden on women to fulfill not only their mission-related tasks, but also to monitor their colleagues.

Karim and Beardsley show that military contingents from countries with better records of gender equality are also associated with lower levels of sexual exploitation and abuse allegations reported against them.<sup>118</sup> Moncrief finds that disciplinary breakdowns among low-level commanders are related to sexual misconduct in missions.<sup>119</sup> We can conclude that preventing sexual exploitation and abuse is a question of establishing a resilient mission culture that values discipline and gender equality rather than a question of peacekeepers' sex. This belief is shared and emphasized by senior MONUSCO personnel.<sup>120</sup>

### Remaining obstacles

Both existing scholarship and our interviews highlight numerous remaining obstacles to gender-responsive and effective peacekeeping. Women represent a small minority of uniformed peacekeeping personnel:



overall, only about five percent of soldiers in military contingents, 11 percent of personnel in formed police units, and 28 percent of individual police officers are women. It is unreasonable to expect a few vastly outnumbered women, in a range of roles with diverse responsibilities, to substantially impact their missions' culture and operational effectiveness.

Additionally, women in PKOs face contextual and structural challenges that cannot be solved by 'adding women and stirring.' In Liberia, for example, men UN personnel created an atmosphere rife with sexual exploitation and abuse that individual uniformed women could not single-handedly reverse.<sup>121</sup> While we did not observe such extremes, several men interviewees expressed attitudes of benevolent sexism, including pointing to their women colleagues' status as mothers as a reason to offer extra support, whereas they did not mention other men's familial relations.<sup>122</sup>

The women interviewed for this study were disproportionately confined to mission bases as a function of their roles as radio operators or analysts. A uniformed woman in Cyprus voiced frustration that the contingent leadership refused to send women on a particular base patrol route under the pretext that the base in question did not have the necessary facilities to accommodate women. To the interviewee, this seemed unreasonable and an excuse to "protect" and "watch over" the women.<sup>123</sup>

Members of MONUSCO also revealed a gendered hierarchy in their thinking about the roles of uniformed men and women. For example, when discussing the different potential impacts of men and women in uniform, one interviewee said men "have the most important part of the job."<sup>124</sup> This illustrates the idealization of the masculine warrior identity and underscores the potential pitfall of pigeon-holing women into feminized roles. It entrenches gendered inequalities within missions limiting the roles and responsibilities women can take on.

'Womanhood' alone cannot be expected to overcome existing social divisions or structures of inequality.<sup>125</sup> Women peacekeepers will not necessarily be able to transcend the religious, national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic divisions that separate peacekeepers from local women.<sup>126</sup> For example, a

MONUSCO soldier cited abject poverty and limited education amongst the Congolese communities she serves as a significant challenge. Health education programs, for example, are of little use when communities lack the infrastructure to abide by personnel's recommendations.<sup>127</sup> Multiple peacekeepers in Lebanon emphasized the importance of understanding local culture and ways of life as necessary to connect with beneficiaries and thereby become effective.<sup>128</sup>

Moreover, generalizing women's roles in PKOs is problematic because gendered impacts will be case-dependent and context-specific. Though some women peacekeepers in the DRC were better able to communicate with local women, uniformed women in Sudan became pariahs. Many locals believed that they were targets for rebel attacks.<sup>129</sup>

Language barriers negatively impact women peacekeepers' alleged advantage in consulting with local women. For example, in the case of MONUSCO, respondents cited ineffective communication as the primary challenge to operational effectiveness.<sup>130</sup> Language barriers forced uniformed women to rely on Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs) to interpret. Given that CLAs are disproportionately men (85% men, 15% women),<sup>131</sup> uniformed women's hypothesized 'advantage' in consulting with local people may be neutralized by the presence of a male interpreter.

The need for mediation between the peacekeepers and beneficiaries may also impede the development of personal connections necessary for locals to divulge sensitive information. This dynamic emerged for at least one stress counselor working in the DRC.<sup>132</sup> Similarly, the short duration of troop deployment<sup>133</sup>— between 6 and 12 months—as well as troops' constant rotation in and out of local communities,<sup>134</sup> prevent the mission from establishing long-term connections with beneficiaries and may limit personnel's context awareness.

Numerous PKO personnel felt that the UN's campaign to depict women as 'more effective' peacekeepers and to boost women's representation in missions incited resentment, hostility, and a sense of disenfranchisement amongst uniformed men. Thus, by essentializing women's roles, the UN may



Peacekeepers from the Argentinian contingent in sector 1 using personal protective equipment in San Martin Camp's duty room to monitor operations and daily patrols in the buffer zone. / Photo by: *Luboš Podhorský*

have worsened gender relations within missions, potentially reducing personnel's ability to cooperate or jeopardizing social cohesion.

Some interlocutors, including a gender focal point, claimed that men and women in the military receive identical treatment, and therefore, women did not need special treatment.<sup>135</sup> Such attitudes may result in a reluctance among women peacekeepers to speak out about the difficulties they face. One gender affairs advisor felt that uniformed women are "sworn to secrecy" because "they do not get out of their line of command; it is not easy to develop trust."<sup>136</sup>

The expectation that women peacekeepers enhance effectiveness may amount to a double burden.<sup>137</sup>

Uniformed women are not only expected to perform better than their male counterparts across several dimensions, but they must do so while facing gender discrimination and harassment themselves.<sup>138</sup> Expecting women to compensate for the shortcomings and bad behavior of men can also be seen as letting men 'off the hook,'<sup>139</sup> in effect allowing their misconduct to persist while women contend with the consequences. This is especially problematic because women are not inherently better at the tasks they are expected to perform, such as dealing with SGBV survivors or de-escalating community tensions. As a result, holding women peacekeepers to a higher standard requires them to invest more time and effort into their work than men, with potentially greater consequences if they fail to perform well.

This inequality has manifested in practice. For example, in Liberia, members of the FFPU engaged with the community through speeches and volunteering in their free time. Another group of women peacekeepers from Rwanda, knowing that they would be expected to deal with SGBV survivors more competently, organized nightly tutorials in their tents.<sup>140</sup> A common refrain among the uniformed women we interviewed was that there was no room for error in their performance, as individual women's work reflected upon all women. As such, women personnel reported feeling obliged to volunteer for tasks to prove their worthiness. One uniformed officer likened the experience to being "contestants on a show," as women are watched and applauded while performing routine tasks.<sup>141</sup>

Of course, gender is just one of many axes of power involved in peacekeeping. Race, class, nationality, and colonial legacies shape the power dynamics between peacekeepers and the "peacekept."<sup>142</sup> To truly protect and empower residents, including women, mission leaders and uniformed personnel must be conscious of the diverse, intersecting nodes of identity, power, privilege, and vulnerability which shape the peacekeeping landscape. Race relations become key in assessing UN peacekeeping missions' operational effectiveness and local legitimacy in African countries.

Civil society leaders from the DRC expressed dismay at the cultural distance between Congolese beneficiaries and European peacekeepers, which reportedly manifested in severe communication problems and a lack of respect towards local populations. One interviewee recounted an instance in which a MONUSCO contingent drove over a local man's car, which was blocking their path: "they did not bother to stop or treat the person as a human being."<sup>143</sup> Another interviewee labeled MONUSCO as an "expression of imperialism and Negrophobia," and explained that even though there are "nice people within missions," it is an institutional problem.<sup>144</sup> MONUSCO peacekeepers' alleged involvement in mineral exploitation, trafficking, and the local sex trade was another concern. One interlocutor suggested that African beneficiaries would be better served by a force composed primarily of African personnel.<sup>145</sup>

Even within peacekeeping operations themselves, there is a highly unequal distribution of labor. Top TCCs are overwhelmingly from the Global South, whereas Global North countries substitute their troops with funding. Even when contingents of the Global North and South are deployed together, as in MINUSMA, inequalities in resources and training lead to disparate death tolls and overall worse mission outcomes.<sup>146</sup>

Interviews with key stakeholders suggested that whether a peacekeeper is a woman or a man is not in itself the most essential determinant of operational effectiveness. Instead, meeting the complex demands of peacekeeping environments requires a diversity of skill sets, perspectives, and approaches. While gender diversity is necessary to craft well-rounded teams, a push for more women—and not for other forms of cultural and experiential diversity—is overly narrow and unlikely to boost effectiveness on its own.

Cultural diversity, for example, was cited as an operational strength. Our interviews also found that culturally specific approaches and behaviors of various troop contingents were particularly effective in different circumstances. Mission personnel noted that Argentine soldiers were more open and sociable with civilians than other nationalities, which was seen as a strong positive contribution in the tense environment of the Cypriot buffer zone.<sup>147</sup>

Furthermore, merely 'adding' more women is unlikely to significantly impact operations, if there are no structural changes or material support. Gender advisors emphasized the need for gender-conscious budgeting, as missions' gendered elements are currently under-resourced. As a result, we see less gender-disaggregated data and limited gender-training opportunities for mission personnel. The coronavirus pandemic has also strained resources, including the use of gender-inclusive military accommodations for quarantining personnel exposed to COVID-19.<sup>148</sup> One respondent felt that the UN set up PKOs' gender teams to fail by these financial shortcomings, reflecting, "I'm expected to do everything with nothing."<sup>149</sup>



# Part IV: Policy recommendations

**Our research revealed** several potential points of intervention for improving both operational effectiveness and its assessment, focusing on the gendered dimensions of PKOs.

The SAGE and CPAS systems have enormous potential to systematize data collection and dissemination and improve missions' capacities to anticipate, prevent, and respond to security threats. The collection of high-quality, structured conflict data, combined with the power of machine learning, has the potential to enhance missions' predictive capabilities. By identifying conflict trends and relevant indicators, SAGE could permit peacekeeping missions to anticipate when and where violent incidents are most likely to occur and respond accordingly, thus strengthening POC and other mandated tasks.

What these systems lack, however, are systematic protocols to incorporate gender into conflict analyses and performance evaluations. Currently, not all missions record the gender composition of patrols and other mission activities. Nor do missions consistently record and analyze the differential impacts of its activities on men and women. This represents a serious but actionable shortcoming for the UN's data-based evaluation systems.

Conceptualizations and operationalizations of 'effectiveness' also underemphasize the importance of local community engagement. The trust and cooperation of local beneficiaries can be a significant boon for missions. Communities are sources of intelligence, foundations for early alert networks, sites of radicalization

or deradicalization, and, of course, the supposed beneficiaries of UN protection. Local information provided to the UN can help anticipate where violence takes place.<sup>150</sup> PKOs must invite local input from all members of society to inform activities, approaches, and priorities. Community consultations are instrumental in informing the conflict analysis and its gendered dimensions. CLAs are crucial in facilitating the necessary interactions to achieve this type of participatory action planning process, though they may be biased given that they originate from host countries.

Below we present four recommendations to improve data collection and analysis, which build on current approaches and address gaps we identified in our analysis.

## **1. Collect gender-disaggregated data on UN activities and operations more systematically**

Currently, SAGE does not require personnel to input data on the gender composition of teams performing a given activity. While UNIFIL collects this information in its system, neither UNFICYP nor MONUSCO collect or analyze gender-disaggregated data. For example, the gender composition of patrols is not systematically recorded, although women's presence on patrols may increase the likelihood that local women approach or share information with peacekeepers.

As missions move to combine SAGE and CPAS systems, a gender lens is essential to analyzing the impact of women on operational effectiveness and



**Bunia, Ituri, DRC:** In the framework of the fight against sexual violence, the Female Engagement Team of the Bangladeshi contingent on 04 December, 2020, visited Mudzipela Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Camp to discuss the issue of violence during conflicts and to explore possible avenues for the rehabilitation of the women affected by displacement. The team reassured the women of MONUSCO's presence on their side. / *Photo by: MONUSCO/Force*

the mission's impact on women in the community. Standardizing gender-disaggregated data across both SAGE and CPAS would improve POC and other mandated tasks, as well. Capturing the number of women peacekeepers involved in an activity and the number of local women benefiting is the first and most essential step towards integrating a systematic gender lens in UN operations, which can then elucidate weaknesses and gaps to be addressed.

Administrators of the SAGE and CPAS systems should introduce new data fields that capture the number of women and men peacekeepers involved in an activity (in the case of SAGE), the number of women, men, and children impacted by the activity (in the case of SAGE), and the number of women or men involved in and impacted by conflict developments (in the case of CPAS).

UN DPO and individual missions should also include incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse in SAGE and CPAS as part of the performance assessment. Our interviews with civil society organizations underscore the toxic effects of incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers. It constitutes direct harm to local beneficiaries, erodes local trust in the mission, and damages the UN's reputation, all of which can impair operational effectiveness.

## **2. Undertake more systematic analysis of qualitative gender data already available**

While missions vary in how much gender-disaggregated data they collect, analyze, and use in the CPAS and SAGE systems, personnel already have the opportunity to record and analyze qualitative data from incident and patrol reports that include open-ended

notes. These reports are a potential source of rich data on peacekeeping behaviors, activities, and impacts. A gendered analysis of these reports presents an important opportunity for missions to improve their engagement with local beneficiaries and draw significant lessons.

Missions should regularly consolidate qualitative data and conduct a gendered analysis to uncover trends in how women and men peacekeepers behave, how they interact with local actors, how they perform mandated tasks, and how women beneficiaries are impacted by and respond to peacekeeping activities.

Such analyses could incorporate data and reports from across mission sectors in order to provide a comprehensive assessment of missions' gendered input, output, and impacts. Findings can then be used to reassess mission priorities, reallocate resources, and more strategically deploy women and men peacekeepers based on their apparent strengths. This can help identify what mission leaders emphasized. It is not about whether the person in uniform identifies as a man or woman, but whether they are the right person for the task.<sup>151</sup>

Such analysis would also allow for the identification of achievements and gaps across missions to inform future policies and guidance.

### **3. Establish mechanisms for regular and systematic community input**

The SAGE and CPAS systems represent important progress toward an integrated model of information collection, analysis, and dissemination. However, they currently have limited opportunities for local community input. Whereas residents are intended to be the primary beneficiaries, missions now base their performance evaluations on strategic indicators selected by mission leadership to align with the mandate.

There are currently no official avenues by which local beneficiaries' feedback and requests are heard and incorporated by mission leadership and other decision-makers. Local insights are vital to uncov-

ering conflict and gender dynamics. Even more importantly, missions should serve local interests and priorities as a matter of principle. CPAS is a step in the right direction of an iterative process. A next step is to make the data collection and analysis more participatory by integrating consultations with local communities, including women-led civil society organizations, to identify their priorities, to inform and adapt mission strategies, activities, and performance indicators. Continuous feedback from beneficiaries should help refine missions' operational activities and effectiveness.

### **4. Improve internal access to data and reporting**

More detailed, accurate, and gender-disaggregated data cannot impact mission outcomes if this data is not widely accessible to mission personnel. Though the SAGE and CPAS systems are designed to break down information silos within missions, in practice, access to these resources remains limited. Access to SAGE, for example, is allocated by JOC personnel. In practice, this means that only JMAC, mission leadership, and select uniform personnel are granted access.

Such limitations constitute a serious shortcoming that undermines the fundamental purpose and potential of the SAGE and CPAS systems. UN missions should consider granting mission-wide access for all but the most sensitive information captured in these databases. It is only by improving familiarity with operational conditions and conflict contexts mission-wide that the predictive potential of SAGE and CPAS can be realized.

Reforms in these directions would generate the type of gender-disaggregated data needed to more accurately assess the differential impacts of both men and women in peacekeeping missions. This, in turn, could underpin advocacy for greater inclusion of women to meet the goals of UNSC 1325 and UN DPO's efforts of gender-responsive peacekeeping.



# Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of our investigation, gender is defined as the broad range of personal expressions, traits, and behaviors related to socially constructed ideas about the sexes. However, due to the paucity of research on non-traditional gender identities in peacekeeping contexts, our study centers around the experiences of cis-gendered ('male' and 'female') civilians and peacekeepers.

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<sup>3</sup> The 13 TCCs are: Brunei, Egypt, Estonia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Malta, North Macedonia, Netherlands, Slovenia, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey according to <https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/operationaleffectandwomenpeacekeepers-31nov2020.pdf> Accessed March 2, 2021; UN DPO. "Uniformed Women in Peace Operations" (August 2020). Accessed February 22, 2021. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/uniformedwomeninfographicupdversion4121020.pdf>.

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<sup>5</sup> Remarks by the UN Secretary-General during the 8508th Security Council meeting. Accessible here <https://www.un-multimedia.org/avlibrary/asset/2379/2379429/>; Accessed February 26, 2021.

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<sup>21</sup> Ruggeri, Dorussen, Gizelis 2017.

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- <sup>143</sup> Interview with Congolese civil society leader, November 19, 2020.
- <sup>144</sup> Interview with Congolese civil society member, March 16, 2021.
- <sup>145</sup> Interview with community liaison assistant, November 3, 2020.
- <sup>146</sup> Cold-Ravnkilde, Signe, Peter Albrecht & Rikke Haugegaard. "Friction and Inequality among Peacekeepers in Mali," *The RUSI Journal* 162 no. 2, (2017): 34-42,.
- <sup>147</sup> Interview with UNFICYP personnel, January 4, 2021.
- <sup>148</sup> Interview with UNIFIL personnel, December 4, 2020.
- <sup>149</sup> Interview with a UN gender advisor, February 5, 2021.
- <sup>150</sup> Duursma, Allard. "Counting Deaths While Keeping Peace: An Assessment of the JMAC's Field Information and Analysis Capacity in Darfur." *International Peacekeeping* 24.5 (2017): 823-847.
- <sup>151</sup> Interviews with MONUSCO and UNFICYP mission leadership.



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# Notes







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