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Peacekeeping Operations and Gender:
Policies for Improvement

Introduction

In 2008, as part of the WPS Agenda, the Security Council used Resolution 1820 to explicitly call for peace operations to deploy more women. There were almost no women deployed at the time — only about 1.4 percent of total military personnel were women.[1] More than a dozen years later, very little has changed. In December 2020, 13 troop-contributing countries (TCCs) 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, and 28 percent of individual police officers.[2]

Against this backdrop of slow progress, the UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO) put forward its Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy in 2018. The Strategy set 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.

In 2018, the UN DPO released its Gender Responsive UN Peacekeeping Policy, equating "operational effectiveness and efficiency" with gender responsiveness.[3] 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.[4]

This policy brief summarizes policy implications and recommendations from a 15-month research project on the differential gendered impacts of men and women in uniform. Our research questions are: How can we measure operational effectiveness? And, what are the gendered impacts of uniformed men and women peacekeepers on operational effectiveness? 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 is based on 78 semi-structured interviews with UN PKO personnel and civil society activists (39 women and 39 men), and a comprehensive review of personnel data, strategy, policy, and standard operating procedure (SOP) documents related to operational effectiveness. The report affirms that women in uniform play important roles in PKOs. It finds that across different missions, women's participation improves community engagement and changes the narrative of women's roles in society. Current concepts and assessments of operational effectiveness

**Women's Participation Rates:
UN PKO Military and Police, 2006–2021**

Source: https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/gender
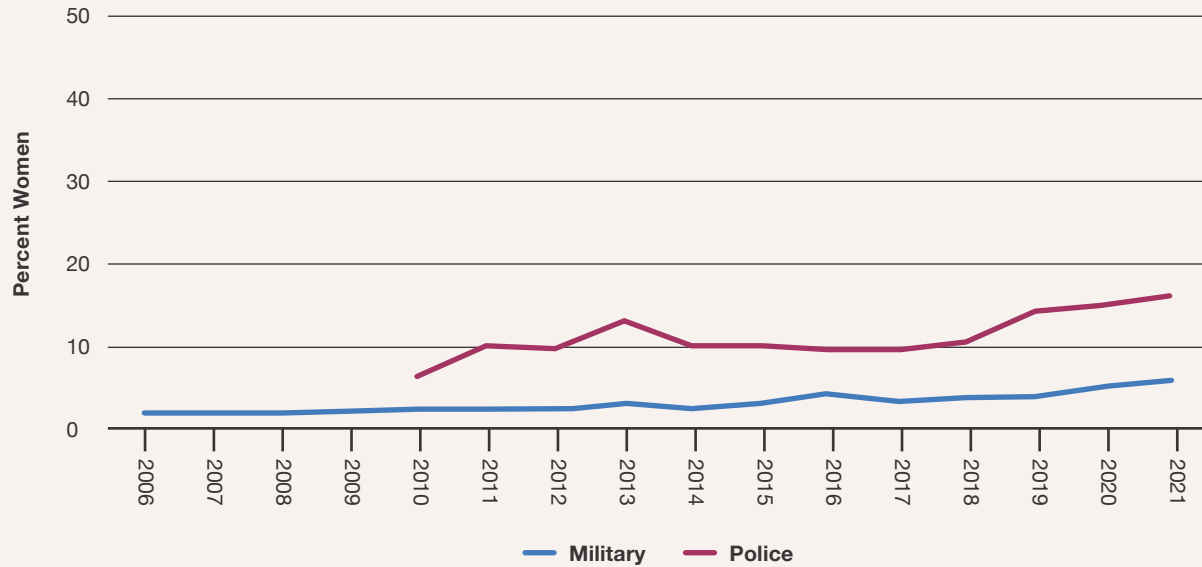
would benefit from improving the UN's engagement with the gendered dimensions of peacekeeping missions. As part of this it is crucial for the UN to reframe the discussion of operational effectiveness around strengthening diversity rather than merely equating increased women's participation with more effective operations. Simultaneously, UN PKOs need to improve gender mainstream data collection and analysis efforts, and provide channels for systematically integrating local input.

The costs of instrumentalizing women: reframing operational effectiveness

The UN has repeatedly argued for the inclusion of women in uniform to improve PKOs' effectiveness in intelligence gathering, local outreach, and protection responses.[5] While many uniformed men agree that their female colleagues contribute to operational ef-

fectiveness, especially in community outreach efforts and through their interactions with local women and girls to build trust with local communities,[6] this framing overall causes more harm than good.

This framing draws on and reinforces gendered stereotypes that female peacekeepers are supposedly more pacific or empathetic. For example, a contingent commander shared that when he wants to project a "softer" posture, usually when engaging with local beneficiaries, he ensures that women are part of the patrol.[7] This mindset restricts women's potential, undermines their professionalism, and under-uses their abilities.

Assuming women's participation in PKOs will improve operational effectiveness across different missions neglects that gendered impacts of both men and women are case-dependent and context-specific and often are intertwined with racial dynamics. Though some wom-

en peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo facilitated community outreach, women peacekeepers in Lebanon faced sexism and racism. Besides their race and gender, peacekeepers' nationality, culture, ethnicity, and how the host society responded to these identities, influences peacekeepers' experiences and behavior.

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 male personnel. Thus, essentializing women's roles may worsen gender relations within missions, potentially reducing personnel's ability to cooperate or jeopardizing social cohesion.

Framing women's participation as enhancing effectiveness creates additional burdens for the women.[8] 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, female 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.[9] 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.[10]

Discussions of gender diversity and operational effectiveness need to consider the existing barriers to meaningful participation, including cultures within PKOs that valorize a warrior image of uniformed troops, the hostility against women, and commanders' reluctance to deploy women in all roles open to men.

We recommend that UN DPO and mission leadership listen to stakeholders who emphasize the value of diversity. Meeting the complex demands of peacekeeping environments requires a diversity of skills, experiences, perspectives, and approaches. Making missions more diverse, ensuring equal opportunity for deployed personnel, and promoting a culture of cooperation and empowerment are crucial to improving operational effectiveness and protecting all local beneficiaries.

UN data collection and analysis

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 Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE) system and the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS) are two key systems.

Despite UN DPO leadership recognizing that gender-responsive and inclusive peacekeeping influences mission effectiveness and the publications of the UN Gender Parity Strategy and the Gender Responsive UN Peacekeeping Policy in 2018, gender analysis and mainstreaming efforts have not been central in the implementation and use of SAGE and CPAS. The push for data-driven peacekeeping requires gendered data collection and analysis.

Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE)

The SAGE system allows mission personnel at the field office level or higher to record violent events and incidents in a structured data format. Indicators include, for example, the number of victims, the sex and ethnicity of victims and perpetrators, and location coordinates.[11]

The SAGE system offers a selection of specialized forms, namely, 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 Joint Operations Center (JOC) and Joint Military Analysis Centre (JMAC) personnel across mission elements, reducing information silos.

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In the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (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 activity form. The lack of comprehensive gender-disaggregated data conceals potentially critical conflict patterns and undermines the system's predictive potential.

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. This limits battalion commanders and uniformed personnel conducting patrols from gaining a more comprehensive understanding of incidents and actions taken. By sharing information on conflict trends and relevant indicators, greater access to SAGE could enable peacekeeping patrols to anticipate when and where violent incidents are most likely to occur and respond accordingly, thus strengthening POC and other

mandated tasks. Systematically collecting and analyzing the gendered dimensions of data are critical to this.

Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS)
CPAS is an integrated performance assessment tool designed to consolidate data on conflict contexts, assess mission output and outcomes against desired impacts, and produce recommendations for improved mission performance.

What constitutes a 'desired impact' is largely at the discretion of mission leaders, who craft priority objectives based on the mission's mandate and corresponding overarching strategic objectives.[12] Local populations have no official channels through which they are invited to shape how the mission is conceived and/or carried out. These concerns are also reflected in feedback from uniformed personnel on the ground: "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."[13]

Limits and ways forward
There is a risk of biased reporting. This can be a serious problem for crimes and conflict incidents known to be systematically under-reported, namely, violence against civilians and conflict-related sexual violence.[14] 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.[15] 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.[16]

SAGE and CPAS are promising new tools that can break down information silos within missions, contrib-

ute to better-informed, more holistic analyses of the operational environment and peacekeeping activities, and improve missions' abilities to predict and respond to incidents.

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.

Recommendations

Peacekeeping missions need to apply a gender lens to its data collection and analysis across all sectors and levels to maximize the systems' potential. We offer five key recommendations to UN DPO and missions on how to optimize SAGE and CPAS:

1. Collect gender-disaggregated data on UN activities and operations more systematically. Data collection through 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. Capturing the number of women and men peacekeepers involved in an activity 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.

2. Undertake a more systematic analysis of 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 offers

an opportunity for peacekeeping missions to improve their engagement with local beneficiaries.

3. Perform comprehensive gendered organizational analysis. PKOs are masculine institutions in which leaders and commanders divide roles, responsibilities, and tasks along gendered lines, and relegate qualified women to roles that do not fully deploy their abilities. We recommend that missions conduct gender audits within deployed contingents to evaluate barriers to women's meaningful participation. In addition, the audit should accompany an analysis of how the privileging of militarized aggression among peacekeepers can negatively impact interactions with local beneficiaries. Understanding the gendered dynamics within missions and in interactions with local beneficiaries is critical to improving operational effectiveness.

4. Establish mechanisms for regular and systematic community input. Assessing effectiveness should account for what affected communities want, need, or expect of PKOs. Currently there are no official avenues for local beneficiaries 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 enable and empower local beneficiaries to inform missions' strategies, activities, and performance indicators.

5. 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 mission personnel to impact operational effectiveness.

Endnotes

1 UN DPO. "Gender statistics Dec 2006." Accessed February 22, 2021. https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/dec06.pdf.

2 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/operationaleffect_and_women_peacekeepers-31_nov_2020.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/uniformed_women_infographic_upd_version4_121020.pdf.

3 UN DPO. "Gender Responsive United Nations Peacekeeping Operations." (February 2018). http://dag.un.org/bitstream/handle/11176/400719/2018.01%20Gender%20Responsive%20United%20Nations%20Peacekeeping%20Operations%20%28Policy%29.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

4 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.

5 Office of the UN Secretary General. "More Women in Peacekeeping Improves Protection Responses, Secretary-General Tells Security Council, Highlighting Successes, Challenges of Gender Equality Strategy" SG/SM/19542-SC/13774-PKO/778 (April 11, 2019).

6 Interviews with MONUSCO, UNIFIL, and UNFICYP personnel.

7 Interview with UNIFIL personnel, February 16, 2021.

8 Wilén 2020.

9 Interview with UNFICYP personnel, January 26, 2021.

10 Pruitt 2016.

11 Interview with MONUSCO Joint Operations Center personnel, February 10, 2021; Duursma, Allard, and John Karlsrud. "Predictive Peacekeeping: Strengthening Predictive Analysis in UN Peace Operations." *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 8 no. 1 (2019):1.

12 Ibid: 3.

13 Interview with MONUSCO personnel, November 17, 2020.

14 Laurence, Marion. "What are the Benefits and Pitfalls of 'Data-Driven' Peacekeeping" *Center for International Policy Studies*, (December 2019).

15 Duursma, Allard. "Counting Deaths While Keeping Peace: An Assessment of the JMAC's Field Information and Analysis Capacity in Darfur." *International Peacekeeping* 24 no. 5 (2017): 823-847.

16 Ibid.

Notes