



Uniformed Women in Peace Operations: Challenging Assumptions and Transforming Approaches

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JUNE 2020

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The views expressed in this publication represent those of the authors and not necessarily those of the International Peace Institute. IPI welcomes consideration of a wide range of perspectives in the pursuit of a well-informed debate on critical policies and issues in international affairs.

The authors would like to thank Nina Bowbridge, Rachel Grimes, Ingrid Munch, Lausanne Ingabire Nsengimana, Callum Watson, and Solène Brabant for their invaluable insights as external reviewers and Lotte Vermeij for her input on the final draft. And, of course, thank you to the irreplaceable Albert Trithart and Meredith Harris for above-and-beyond editing assistance.

IPI would like to acknowledge its generous donors, whose support makes publications such as this possible. IPI is grateful to the Government of Canada's Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations for funding this project.

Executive Summary

Over the past twenty years, UN peace operations have made progress toward gender equality. Most mandates refer to women or gender, and the UN has set numerical targets to increase the percentage of women peacekeepers in all aspects of peace operations. Meeting—and exceeding—these targets, however, is just one aspect of meaningful integration for uniformed women. That integration requires a better understanding of the barriers and often-unrealistic expectations facing uniformed women.

The best strategies for increasing the number of women in and better integrating women into the UN's military and police structures are still under debate. On the military side, one attempt to integrate women has been through female engagement teams, but the approach to these teams has been ad hoc, with no definitive policy or standardized training. On the police side, the UN is meeting its targets and integrating women primarily through individual posts and formed police units.

But in both the military and police components, women who have been integrated into peace operations face numerous barriers. These range from practical challenges to taboos and stigmas. Mission leaders often look primarily at a woman's gender at the expense of her identity as a professional. This can lead them to conflate women peacekeepers with local non-mission civilian women who need protection and thus keep them on-base instead of allowing them to patrol. Another systemic challenge is sexual harassment and assault of both men and women deployed to peace operations.

These challenges are particularly pervasive in the practice and rhetoric around women, peace, and security and the protection of civilians. Conversations around protection tend to use the term "women and children," which lumps together two different demographic groups, reinforces the idea that women need protection, treats women as a unitary group, and excludes the protection needs of men. These conversations also tend to disproportionately focus on conflict-related sexual violence and can be based on unproven assumptions.

To achieve their goals on women's participation in peacekeeping, the UN and member states need to consider transformative possibilities that push back against these assumptions and norms. This requires grounding integration strategies in evidence, transforming missions to improve the experiences of women peacekeepers, and implementing a gendered approach to community engagement and protection.

Introduction

The women, peace, and security (WPS) agenda came onto the international stage in 1995 through the Beijing Platform for Action and was institutionalized in the UN system in 2000 with the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325.¹ Resolution 1325 and subsequent WPS resolutions have influenced UN peacekeeping documents and policies, at least on a rhetorical level, as most peacekeeping operations' mandates refer to women or gender.² Many hail this as a positive development, pointing out that these references to gender in mission mandates and UN Security Council resolutions signal a commitment to gender equality, and particularly to women's representation at all levels of peacekeeping and peace processes. Coupled with national and international commitments to establish benchmarks for women's participation, these developments signal progress toward gender equality. This progress has manifested itself across peace and security institutions and processes, including political transitions, negotiations, peace processes, national armed forces and police, and UN peace operations.

This issue brief focuses on uniformed women's participation in UN peace operations. It begins with an overview of how the UN and troop- and police-contributing countries (T/PCCs) are trying to integrate uniformed women into missions and how mission mandates interact with the WPS agenda. It then expounds upon expectations of uniformed women in peacekeeping operations, specifically in regards to the protection of civilians, as well as structural barriers, taboos, and stigmas that affect uniformed women's deployment experiences. The paper also provides insight into how

peacekeeping operations should take gender into account in the face of emerging challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

This paper is the first published under the International Peace Institute's Women in Peace Operations project, funded by the Government of Canada's Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations. This project aims to challenge assumptions around women's participation in peace operations. It provides an overview of research that will be conducted through May 2022 and concludes with emerging findings for researchers and policymakers from ongoing work. This issue brief is informed by desk research and five expert roundtables in New York.³

Women's Participation in Peacekeeping: Looking beyond the Numbers

Between 1957 and 1989, only twenty uniformed women served as UN peacekeepers.⁴ By contrast, as of January 2020, 5,284 uniformed women were actively deployed, accounting for 6.4 percent of military and police personnel.⁵ This increase was not accidental. As Sabrina Karim and Kyle Beardsley point out, the integration of women into peacekeeping operations coincided with a strategic shift from "men observing and monitoring peace in conflict-ridden countries" to peacekeepers "changing local institutions and ensuring that different norms, such as gender equality, permeate them."⁶ The rationale for this shift was laid out in a 2009 report from the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support.⁷

1 Both the Beijing Platform for Action and Resolution 1325 build on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which formalizes obligations on women's rights. Ten resolutions make up the women, peace, and security (WPS) agenda in the UN Security Council, beginning with Resolution 1325 (2000), which has framed the agenda for twenty years.

2 Sabrina Karim and Kyle Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping: Women, Peace, and Security in Post-Conflict States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 15; NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, "Mapping Women, Peace and Security in the UN Security Council: 2018," November 2019; Gabrielle Belli, "Strong Gender Focus Needed During UN Peacekeeping Discussions," NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, March 28, 2018.

3 These roundtables were held on October 2, October 4, and November 1, 2019, and on January 24 and February 4, 2020. All the roundtables were held under the Chatham House rule of non-attribution, and most were comprised of uniformed women and experts on women's participation in peace operations from civil society, academia, and the UN system. The roundtables included two expert advisory groups, one with a specific focus on methodology; a dialogue on the intersection of the WPS and protection of civilians (POC) agendas at the UN; a meeting on developments in female engagement teams and mixed engagement platoons; and a discussion exclusively among uniformed women to discuss stigmas and taboos.

4 Chandrima Das and Kelli Meyer, "Milestone in UN Peacekeeping: Women Take the Lead in Cyprus," United Nations Foundation, February 7, 2019.

5 UN Peacekeeping, "Gender Report," January 2020, available at https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/7_gender_report_15.pdf.

6 Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*, p. 11.

7 UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support, "A New Partnership Agenda: Charting a New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping," July 2009.

In the decade since this report was published, mission mandates have become increasingly broad and complex, and UN peacekeepers have increasingly come under threat. They are sometimes directly targeted, as in Mali, where peacekeepers are confronted by a combination of complex regional politics, parallel counterterrorism efforts, and attacks on local populations. Alongside these challenges, peacekeeping missions have been given more explicit mandates related to the protection of civilians, conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), and children and armed conflict. There has also been increasing awareness of the scope of abuse of civilians by some peacekeepers and the need to hold personnel and leadership accountable.⁸

These developments coincide with a growing recognition of the benefits of women's participation in peacekeeping. In an effort to increase women's participation, the UN has set numerical targets for women in military and police contributions.⁹ The Office of Military Affairs aims for 25 percent of its contracted military staff and 25 percent of its military observers and staff officers to be women by 2028. Anticipating more difficulty increasing the percentage of women within troop contingents, it set a more modest goal of 15 percent by 2028. The Police Division aims for 35 percent of its seconded headquarters staff, 30 percent of its seconded field mission staff, 30 percent of individual police officers, and 20 percent of members of formed police units (FPUs) to be women by 2028.¹⁰

Despite recent increases, the UN is far from many of these targets and seems unlikely to meet all of them on time. In 2019, women comprised 15.1 percent of military observers and staff officers and

just 4.4 percent of military contingents. That same year, women comprised 26.8 percent of individual police officers, 11.1 percent of members of FPUs, and 27.0 percent of justice and corrections personnel (see Figure 1).¹¹ The lower rate of women's participation in troop contingents indicates that there are greater barriers to women's military participation than there are to women's participation in the police.¹² One expert also pointed out that it is important to consider these numbers within the broader context of UN peacekeeping, including the overall decrease in the number of peacekeepers due to recent mission drawdowns and closures.¹³ An overall decrease in the number of peacekeepers could make it easier for the UN to achieve certain targets, as it would be drawing on the same pool to fill fewer positions.

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The low rates of uniformed women's participation result from complex challenges, many of which extend beyond the UN system. Since peacekeeping troop contingents are provided by national militaries, and the UN is limited in its ability to enforce an appeal

for member states to increase women's deployment, domestic dynamics in TCCs are critical.¹⁴ This can lead to the assumption that a significant increase in the number of women in those contingents is dependent on similar increases at the national level. This is not necessarily the case, however. Notably, Karim and Beardsley have shown that there is significant variation around the ratios of women in national armed and police forces to women in military and police contributions, which underscores the many factors that should be considered when assessing what is either encouraging or precluding uniformed women's participation.¹⁵

8 UN Peacekeeping, "Action for Peacekeeping: Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations," August 16, 2018, p. 3.

9 See, for example, UN Security Council Resolution 2242 (October 13, 2015), UN Doc. S/RES/2242.

10 UN Department of Peace Operations, "Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018–2028," pp. 4–6.

11 See, for example, UN Peacekeeping, "Gender Report," January 2020.

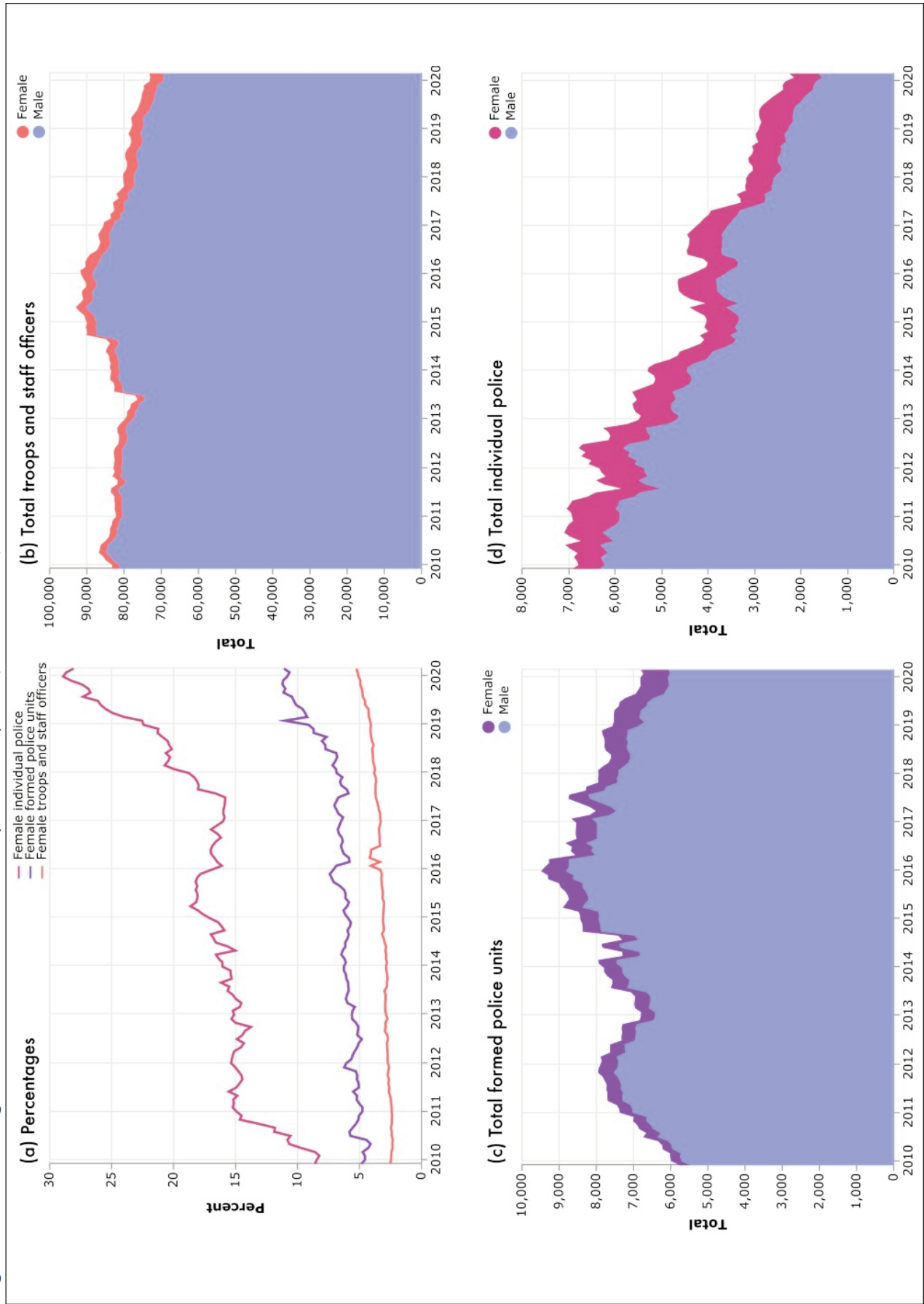
12 Marta Ghittoni, Léa Lehoucq, and Callum Watson, "Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations: Baseline Study," DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, July 2018, p. 8.

13 IPI roundtable, New York, October 2, 2019.

14 Natasja Rupesinghe, Eli Stamnes, John Karlsrud, "WPS and Female Peacekeepers," in *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security*, Sara E. Davies and Jacqui True, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 212.

15 Sabrina Karim and Kyle Beardsley, "Ladies Last: Peacekeeping and Gendered Protection," in *Gender, Peace and Security: Implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325*, Theodora-Ismene Gizelis and Louise Olsson, eds. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 74–77.

Figure 1. Percentage and number of women peacekeepers (2010-2020)



Even if the rate of women's participation increases exponentially, however, this increase in numbers will not be transformative if isolated from other efforts. Critics of the targets point out that they amount to tokenism, particularly if they are the sole or central goal of an initiative.¹⁶ Others have pointed out that gender-balancing efforts are a necessary but insufficient means to address the dearth of uniformed women in missions.¹⁷ The UN's goals for gender mainstreaming, which aim to include a gender perspective in every component of UN missions, are thus an important complement to these targets.

It is also important to consider both quantitative and qualitative participation; women have a right to deploy in any role for which they are trained and that is commensurate with their rank and experience, including at the leadership level. For example, the UN Women's Elise Initiative Fund offers a financial premium to T/PCCs for "gender-strong units." These premiums are available to military battalions and FPU's that not only substantially include women in all roles and exceed the numerical targets set by the UN by at least 5 percent but also implement complementary practices. These include ensuring all unit members receive gender-equity training and that the T/PCC has provided "adequate equipment and other materiel to ensure parity of deployment conditions for women and men peacekeepers."¹⁸

One risk of both quantitative and qualitative efforts is that they often focus only on women. There is a tendency to view women as a monolithic group or to conflate "women" with "gender." Rather, a gendered approach should address the diversity of

women's experiences and perspectives. It should also avoid placing the burden of change on women as individuals because of their gender identity.¹⁹ Integrating women into peacekeeping operations requires examining and, in many cases, changing men's behavior as well. For example, "men are not going to raise protection of civilians questions if they think people do not want or expect to hear about [gender-related issues] from men."²⁰ Similarly, gender advisers should be appointed for their expertise in applying a gender perspective rather than for their gender identity. This means that men can and should also be filling these roles "when their expertise fits" and "should also be encouraged to gain this expertise," as one expert stated.²¹

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Key Areas for Research

Meeting and exceeding the UN's targets for women's participation and increasing women's meaningful participation across all levels of peacekeeping will require the UN to better understand the barriers and often-unrealistic expectations facing uniformed women. While recent efforts, including the piloting of a new comprehensive barrier assessment by DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance and Cornell University, have started to fill this gap, there is a great deal of work left to be done.²² This section describes some of the aspects of women's participation in UN peace operations that require further research to challenge gendered assumptions and provide concrete evidence for effective policymaking. These issue areas will be the focus of forthcoming IPI publications and policy recommendations.

16 Sabrina Karim and Kyle Beardsley, "Female Peacekeepers and Gender Balancing: Token Gestures or Informed Policymaking?" *International Interactions* 39, no. 4 (2013); and Rupasinghe, Stamnes, and Karlsrud, "WPS and Female Peacekeepers."

17 Rupasinghe, Stamnes, and Karlsrud, "WPS and Female Peacekeepers."

18 UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, "Elsie Initiative for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations," available at <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/EIF00>.

19 IPI roundtable, New York, February 4, 2020.

20 IPI roundtable, New York, November 1, 2019.

21 Ibid.

22 DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance and Cornell University, "Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) Barrier Assessment Methodology," forthcoming. This is currently being piloted in Bangladesh, Ghana, Jordan, Mongolia, Norway, Senegal, Uruguay, and Zambia.

Strategies for Integrating Women into Peace Operations

At both the national and international levels, debates have carried on as to what might be the most effective means for both increasing the number of women in and better integrating women into the UN's military and police structures. While numerical representation can increase without substantive integration and participation, women could also be more broadly integrated across diverse roles and ranks without significantly increasing their numbers. Because of the structure of peace operations—national militaries and police forces sent on international deployments—training practices and strategies for integration are different for each T/PCC, and therefore for each UN mission. While there has been some success in deploying women to individual posts—such as individual police officers, military observers, and staff officers—the means by and extent to which women are integrated into police and military contingents has varied. The UN is also bringing more women into leadership roles; while there is still a long way to go on this, recent efforts have been successful.²³ Some experts point out that seeing more women in positions of leadership is likely to bring even more growth in women's overall participation.²⁴

On the military side, alongside efforts to increase women's presence in diverse roles across both individual posts and contingents, women's integration has sometimes taken the form of female engagement teams (FETs). FETs, however, represent only one small role that women play in peace operations' military components and are not a strategy to meet numerical targets.

FETs are tactical sub-sub-units meant to gather information and gain access to populations by directly engaging host communities, and their tasks are often framed as responding to the gendered

needs of those communities.²⁵ The level of their engagement differs depending on the deployment, mission mandate, and mission leadership. FETs, as we understand them today, were first used by international military forces in Iraq and Afghanistan and have been deployed on an ad hoc basis to several UN missions in recent years.²⁶ The length of time the UN has been using FETs in peacekeeping is difficult to assess because they became part of the UN system on the initiative of individual TCCs, and there is no official UN policy on them. Even now, FETs often lack a clear structure or defined, standardized capabilities. Instead, they are formed on an ad hoc basis, sometimes at the mission level, after troops have been trained and deployed. FETs are particularly prevalent in missions with robust POC mandates.²⁷

This lack of clarity on the structure of FETs speaks to ongoing disagreement about the role of these teams in community engagement, especially as community engagement has emerged as an increasingly important aspect of peacekeeping. Leadership has historically been at odds about whether the “female” component of FETs should refer to the members of the team (meaning that the team is entirely made up of women) or to the targets of the team's engagement (meaning the local women the team is meant to serve). To move beyond this debate, the Office of Military Affairs is shifting toward the use of “engagement platoons,” which will be mixed-gender units trained for engagement with all members of the community and designed to increase situational awareness for the battalion commander.²⁸ There is still some debate about whether mixed-gender engagement platoons of 50 percent women and 50 percent men would be more effective at reaching the entire community or whether the inclusion of uniformed men would hinder engagement. Currently, there is little research on the use of FETs versus mixed-gender or all-male engagement teams in UN peacekeeping missions.²⁹

23 The UN has recently deployed two women force commanders and two women deputy force commanders. It has also created a talent pipeline to bring women police into leadership positions. See UN Peacekeeping “Women in Peacekeeping,” available at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/women-peacekeeping>.

24 IPI roundtable, New York, February 4, 2020. See also: Francesca Mold, “New UN Police Commissioner Urges Other Female Officers to Join Her in Protecting Civilians and Building Peace in South Sudan,” UNMISS, May 25, 2018.

25 IPI roundtable, New York, January 24, 2020.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid. The authors thank Lausanne Ingabire Nsengimana for clarification on this point.

28 Ibid.

29 IPI is conducting research on this topic, which will be the subject of a forthcoming policy paper.

The lack of definitive UN policy and guidance on FETs has made it difficult to standardize trainings. The UN Office of Military Affairs has included a policy on engagement platoons in the most recent UN Infantry Battalion Manual, which is the first step in standardizing training and implementation. Full integration of the engagement platoons will be incremental; in the meantime, implementation of these gendered intervention strategies remains ad hoc from mission to mission and largely dependent on individual military gender advisers and TCCs' own training practices and priorities at the national level. Community engagement training for military peacekeeping contingents is left to TCCs or initiatives like the US State Department's Global Peace Operations Initiative with little to no standardization.³⁰ This can lead to disparities between the content of trainings and the roles of FETs once deployed, with some women peacekeepers reporting that they felt ill-equipped to directly engage with traumatized community members.

This lack of adequate training could be due, in part, to functionalist assumptions by leaders in national militaries. For example, one study of Rwandan peacekeepers found that many leaders assumed women "naturally knew how to respond to local women's needs." It was thought that they "inherently possessed the required skill set, incorporating the traditional feminine traits of empathy, compassion, communication and the ability to care for vulnerable people."³¹ In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, female members of the UN mission's troop contingents have been sent to distribute books and water to school children and are cited by the mission as role models for local women.³²

Some experts, however, have also pointed out that UN training requirements that are too rigid are likely to be ineffective. Trainings need to account for factors such as the diversity of TCCs' cultural contexts, financial and training resources, force

demographics, and internal norms.³³ Moreover, creating a policy or providing guidance does not necessarily mean that these will be implemented, since troops are ultimately still trained by TCCs and other external actors.

The Police Division is meeting its numerical targets and integrating women police primarily as individual officers and as members of FPUs. The UN has deployed FPUs since 1999, with approximately 140 officers in each unit. Most police deployed with the UN are part of an FPU.³⁴

These units have dedicated training structures and gender mainstreaming strategies and practices, and in 2007, India deployed the first ever all-female FPU to Liberia. By the time that mission closed in 2016, nine all-female FPUs had rotated through. This initiative was praised by many, including the former president of Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.³⁵ As is often the case for women participating in UN peacekeeping operations and other security institutions, this praise was in part due to policewomen being seen as "role models" for local women. Since India's 2007 deployment in Liberia, Bangladesh and Rwanda have also deployed all-female FPUs to the UN's missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and Haiti (MINUSTAH).³⁶ Rwanda also deployed a 50-50 "perfectly gender balanced" FPU to South Sudan (UNMISS) in 2018.³⁷

The number of women police has been steadily increasing in large part due to serious recruiting efforts, beginning with the 2009 "Global Effort" to increase the number of women eligible for deployment as UN police officers. The Police Division has implemented the lessons learned from the all-female FPUs to shift toward prioritizing the deployment of mixed-gender units that include at least one platoon's worth of female officers.³⁸ As with military peacekeepers, women police are often

30 IPI roundtable, New York, January 24, 2020.

31 Georgina Holmes, "Female Military Peacekeepers Left Feeling Overwhelmed After Inadequate Training," *The Conversation*, May 29, 2019. See also: Rupesinghe, Stannes, and Karlsrud: "WPS and Female Peacekeepers."

32 MONUSCO, "GHANBATT Female Engagement Team Boosts Image of Ghana in UN Operations in DRC," January 22, 2019.

33 IPI roundtable, New York, January 24, 2020.

34 UN Police, "Formed Police Units (FPUs)," available at <https://police.un.org/en/formed-police-units-fpus>.

35 UN Africa Renewal, "Hailed as 'Role Models,' All-Female Indian Police Unit Departs UN Mission in Liberia," February 2016.

36 UN Police, "Global Effort Leads to Increase in Female UN Police Worldwide," June 2011.

37 Filip Andersson, "Perfectly Gender Balanced Rwandan Formed Police Unit Arrives in Juba," UNMISS News, June 27, 2018.

38 Ibid.

spotlighted for their contributions that relate to other women, such as activities celebrating International Women's Day and engagement with displaced women and children to help them understand their rights and how to access services.³⁹

Taboos, Stigmas, and Barriers Facing Women Peacekeepers

Despite calls for increased women's participation, uniformed women continue to face numerous barriers. At a February 2020 roundtable at IPI, uniformed women described using equipment designed for "standard" (i.e., masculine) body types that was not suitable for them to use safely.⁴⁰ If a mission is not equipped with protective gear that fits women, these women may be unable to deploy on patrol, forcing them to remain on base.⁴¹ Uniformed women also described limited or unequal accommodations for sleeping or bathing on-base and difficulty accessing health services. Moreover, they feel that the baseline for performance excellence is higher for them than for their male counterparts.

Beyond these practical considerations and expectations of their professional performance, individual women also face taboos and stigmas (a focus of ongoing research at IPI). Given that UN troops come from myriad countries—and therefore myriad cultural, military, and political backgrounds—these are particularly challenging to study. For example, women with children who deploy describe being perceived as "bad mothers," as though they are relinquishing their familial duties or bucking tradition. Many have also described the stigma faced by single women before and during deployment, whereby the wives of their male peers perceive them as a threat. Such perceptions can bar uniformed women from being fully

One uniformed woman said that a commander once told her, "It is hard to have women in the mission because where there are women, there is sex."

accepted into a contingent and create additional stress. Many women have come up with strategies to mitigate the tension, but these can be time-intensive; one woman spent the weeks leading up to deployment getting to know every wife individually in her off-hours, in the hope that this would reassure them that she was not a threat to their marriages.⁴² This demonstrates how the burden of change often falls on individual women rather than on institutions.

Uniformed women have also anecdotally expressed that the actions of one woman are often seen to represent the actions of all women, particularly when these actions are perceived negatively. For example, when an individual uniformed woman makes a mistake, leaders have been known to hold

that mistake against all women in the security forces. Some have even gone so far as to use an individual uniformed woman's personal decisions as an excuse not to recruit more women. One uniformed woman related

how her commander told her he did not want more women serving under his command because he had previously worked with one very effective woman who had become pregnant and left, which he viewed as abandonment.⁴³ Such essentialist expectations that women will have children might impact leaders' decisions about whether to recruit or deploy them, regardless of whether they actually intend to have children.

Relatedly, mission leaders often look primarily at a woman's gender at the expense of her identity as a military professional. Even though many military women feel that they are a "soldier first, woman second," the opposite is often true on mission, where their role as soldiers or police is seen as secondary. Such assumptions often manifest themselves in taboos and stigmas that individual women experience.⁴⁴ This can make it difficult for women to rise up in the ranks. It can also lead to the

39 "More Women Police Officers Needed in UN Peacekeeping Missions," *UN News*, available at <https://news.un.org/en/gallery/556201>.

40 IPI roundtable, New York, February 4, 2020.

41 IPI roundtable, New York, January 24, 2020.

42 IPI roundtable, New York, February 4, 2020.

43 Ibid.

44 This frustration was repeated by uniformed women from myriad countries at IPI's February 4, 2020, roundtable.

“siloeing” of women in roles considered to be softer, safer, or more feminine, such as noncombatant roles or work in areas such as community engagement. As missions increasingly militarize and deploy to contexts where “there is no peace to keep,” women are likely to be “shielded even further.”⁴⁵ This is not helped by the fact that many leadership structures still ascribe to the heteronormative and misogynistic perception that women only bring their sexuality and gender identity to military contexts. One uniformed woman said that a commander once told her, “It is hard to have women in the mission because where there are women, there is sex.”⁴⁶

When mission leaders are focused on the gender of women soldiers, they often conflate these uniformed peacekeepers with local non-mission civilian women who need protection. As a result, women are often deployed to contexts considered safer or are kept on-base instead of being allowed to patrol. Among other things, this keeps women peacekeepers from interacting with the local population, which limits their ability to carry out the mission’s mandate.⁴⁷ One expert reported that a senior official told her he “did not want to be responsible for women being killed,” when discussing women’s deployment to high-risk conflict zones.⁴⁸

Such attitudes suggest that leaders in both T/PCCs and missions are less resilient to female casualties.⁴⁹ The researchers Karim and Beardsley have shown that military contingents exhibit a “gendered protection norm” that men are protectors and women need protection.⁵⁰ It follows that men in

command may see female casualties under their watch as personal failures in their masculine duty to protect. This gendered protection norm may be weaker for police, perhaps because police officers are more likely than soldiers to be deployed as individuals.⁵¹ Another significant difference is that national police forces serve a different function than national militaries, and police—regardless of gender—typically interact with local populations more regularly in their home countries. Additionally, though some of the highest proportions of female police are sent to “relatively precarious conflict zones” like Afghanistan and Sudan, these missions’ mandates are “more oriented toward political and observer responsibilities than toward the physical provision of security.”⁵²

Karim and Beardsley’s research shows that TCCs “appear especially hesitant to send female peacekeepers to places where gendered violence may be higher.”⁵³ In recent consultations, however, several uniformed women stated that they were more worried for their safety within military camps and bases than on the battlefield or on patrol. These statements are consistent with the statistics, which show that both men and women face a high risk of sexual assault by their colleagues while on deployment.⁵⁴ Many national militaries and police forces are also seeing rates of sexual harassment and assault rise in conjunction with the increased participation of uniformed women in those institutions.⁵⁵ This data likely understates the problem, as many countries struggle to properly and comprehensively record reports of harassment and assault in their militaries.⁵⁶

45 Rupesinghe, Stamnes, and Karlsrud, “WPS and Female Peacekeepers,” p. 217.

46 IPI roundtable, New York, October 2, 2019.

47 Examples of this have been cited across the expert consultations and research workshops, including as an explanation for the high rate of women’s deployment to the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus and for the hesitation expressed by senior leadership to deploy women to missions in places like Mali that are considered more volatile and dangerous. See also: Nina Wilén, “What’s the ‘Added Value’ of Male Peacekeepers? (Or—Why We Should Stop Instrumentalising Female Peacekeepers’ Participation),” Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations, February 2020, p. 3.

48 IPI roundtable, New York, February 4, 2020.

49 IPI roundtable, New York, October 2, 2019. The authors thank Callum Watson for his nuanced contributions to this point in the review process.

50 Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 80.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 80.

54 Andrew Morral, et al., “Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the U.S. Military,” Rand Corporation, 2014; Sarah Lazare, “Military Sexual Assault and Rape ‘Epidemic,’” *Al Jazeera*, October 20, 2011; Quratulain Fatima, “Across the World, Militaries Have a Sexual Violence Problem,” *Al Jazeera*, May 4, 2018. Research also indicates that this issue is not specific to the military. For example, see Deloitte, “Safe Space Survey Report,” January 2019; and Dyan Mazurana and Phoebe Donnelly, “STOP the Sexual Assault Against Humanitarian and Development Aid Workers,” May 2017.

55 See, for example: Henry Jones, “New Figures Reveal 35% Rise in Military Sexual Offences,” *UK Defence Journal*, March 29, 2019; Ranjit Bhushan, “India’s Policewomen Increasingly Feel Unsafe at the Workplace,” *CNBC TV18*, February 28, 2020; Alia Allana, “The Police Rapes,” *Fountain Ink*, March 6, 2017; and Dave Philipps, “‘This Is Unacceptable.’ Military Reports a Surge of Sexual Assaults in the Ranks,” *New York Times*, May 2, 2019.

56 Christina Dodds, “Sexual Harassment Is a Real Problem in the Armed Forces—And Offences Are Not Being Properly Recorded,” *The Conversation*, July 23, 2019.

While often reduced to individual action, sexual harassment and assault of both men and women in security institutions is a systemic problem. It is rooted in cultures of impunity around hazing, unchecked “military masculinity,” and substandard accommodations and resources for women.⁵⁷ It is exacerbated by the notion of “brotherhood” that pervades many security institutions, making it difficult for victims or witnesses to “betray” their colleagues by reporting them and risk retaliation.⁵⁸ So far, however, the UN’s efforts to eradicate sexual misconduct have mostly addressed external misconduct (e.g., peacekeepers’ interactions with local populations).⁵⁹ Internal efforts are largely limited to online modules on harassment and abuse of authority that all peacekeepers are required to take prior to deployment, which lack substance or staying power.

These taboos, stigmas, and barriers faced by individual women have a direct effect on efforts to increase the number of women in UN peacekeeping and bring women into meaningful roles across all aspects and levels of peace operations. For example, a recent study shows that, though women are increasingly entering the jobs pipeline for combat roles in the US military, their attrition rate for the army’s infantry training is 31 percent higher than that of their male counterparts.⁶⁰ Karim and Beardsley also found that sexual and gender-based harassment was the second most-cited reason women gave for not deploying.⁶¹ Understanding the experiences of individual women is necessary to address such

One expert reported that a senior official told her he “did not want to be responsible for women being killed.”

structural challenges.

Women’s Roles in Protection and Host-Community Engagement

The WPS and protection of civilians (POC) agendas have a great deal of practical overlap, and civilian protection needs are often cited in calls for uniformed women’s participation.⁶² Even so, there is not yet a “comprehensive picture of what peacekeeping missions do on the ground to protect civilians and implement WPS... across practice and academia.”⁶³

Though the POC agenda has typically been gender-neutral in its language, scholars point out that the understanding of “civilians” in armed conflict settings is “partly gendered” in a way that reinforces the notion of women as victims

and men as perpetrators of violence.⁶⁴ Moreover, the POC agenda tends to overemphasize CRSV when it does introduce gendered language, reinforcing this gendered understanding of civilians.⁶⁵ The WPS agenda, on the other hand, does use gendered language but has “over-relied on female victimhood” when discussing protection. It likewise tends to focus on CRSV, which is routinely discussed as a women’s issue, despite evidence to the contrary.⁶⁶

Experts have called for greater connectivity between WPS and POC beyond CRSV.⁶⁷ The 2020 POC Handbook references myriad protection

57 IPI roundtable, New York, February 4, 2020.

58 Human Rights Watch, “Embattled: Retaliation against Sexual Assault Survivors in the US Military,” May 2015.

59 UN Peacekeeping, “Standards of Conduct,” available at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/standards-of-conduct>.

60 Emma Moore, “Women in Combat: Five-Year Status Update,” Center for a New American Security, March 2020.

61 Karim and Beardsley, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping*, pp. 126–127. See also: Ghittoni, Lehouck, and Watson, “Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations: Baseline Study,” p. 36.

62 IPI roundtable, New York, November 1, 2019; IPI policy forum on “Safeguarding Civilians during a Pandemic: The Repercussions of COVID-19 on the Protection Agenda,” New York, May 28, 2020; UN Security Council 8508th Meeting, UN Doc. S/PV.8508, April 11, 2019; UN Peacekeeping, “Women in Peacekeeping,” available at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/women-peacekeeping>.

63 Hannah Dönges and Janosch Kullenberg, “What Works (and Fails) in Protection,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security*, p. 161.

64 Lisa Hultman and Angela Muvumba Sellström, “WPS and Protection of Civilians,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security*, p. 598. To identify “civilians” necessitates identifying “combatants”; this has traditionally reinforced the oversimplified notion of “women as victims and men as perpetrators of violence.” Therefore, even when POC is presented in gender-neutral language, there is at least a partial, innate understanding of “civilians” as feminized victims.

65 Ibid, p. 603.

66 Dönges and Kullenberg, “What Works (and Fails) in Protection,” p. 172.

67 IPI roundtable, New York, November 1, 2019.

concerns facing men, women, and children as distinct interest groups.⁶⁸ Similarly, the Police Division integrates the concerns and vulnerabilities of women, men, boys, and girls into the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all police activities.⁶⁹ However, much of the UN's rhetoric around women's participation in peacekeeping lacks this nuance, pointing to the value of increasing women's participation in order to better protect women and children.⁷⁰

The pervasive emphasis on “women and children” in conversations about uniformed women's participation involves a number of problematic assumptions. First, the conflation of women and children underlines the reductive view that women do not have agency in their own safety and protection and thus need to be protected. This reinforces the idea that women are innocent “family members rather than independent actors.”⁷¹ Second, it suggests that women and children—two very different demographics—share the same protection needs, which “simultaneously infantilizes women and negates the complexity of children's issues.”⁷² Third, it assumes that all women share a unitary point of view that holds other women's best interests at heart—to the exclusion of all other interests. Finally, this framing excludes men, whose specific protection needs are rarely, if ever, discussed.

As mentioned above, descriptions of women's protection needs are also often disproportionately focused on CRSV.⁷³ This overemphasis on CRSV can overlook other forms of gender-based violence while also assuming that the only victims of CRSV are women and girls. While the UN has recently begun to include “men and boys” in discussions of sexual violence, it is overwhelmingly to highlight their individual roles in preventing sexual violence through behavioral change and awareness-raising.⁷⁴ There has been less effort to consider men and boys' complex status as potential victims or the role patriarchy and masculinity play in the continued threat of violence.⁷⁵ The perpetuation of assumptions that only women and girls are victims of sexual violence in conflict ignores extensive research on men and boys who experience CRSV.⁷⁶ Similarly, women are consistently cast as civilian victims, which erases not only their roles in political leadership, mediation, and negotiation, but also their roles as conflict actors and agents of political violence. Even as uniformed women's participation in national militaries and UN deployments receives greater attention, women's voluntary participation in non-state armed groups is often overlooked. This can lead to the omission of women's needs from peace and post-conflict processes such as demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR).⁷⁷

68 Despite several sections acknowledging that men and boys can also be victims of sexual violence and that protection concerns extend far beyond women, the handbook also repeatedly lumps “women and children” together. UN Department of Peace Operations, “The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping: Handbook,” 2020.

69 “UN Must Bring More Women Police Officers into the Fold to Be Effective—UN Peacekeeping Official,” *UN News*, November 6, 2018; UN Peacekeeping, “Female Rwandan Police Officers Empower Vulnerable Women and Children in UN Protection Site,” October 1, 2018.

70 UN Peacekeeping, “Women in Peacekeeping,” available at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/women-peacekeeping>. For other instances of what Cynthia Enloe has called “womenandchildren,” see: UN Security Council 8508th Meeting, UN Doc. S/PV.8508, April 11, 2019; UN Security Council Resolution 2514; UN Women, “Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: An Analytical Inventory of Peacekeeping Practice,” 2010; and Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, “Handbook for United Nations Field Missions on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence,” June 2020.

71 Cynthia Enloe, “Women and Children: Making Feminist Sense of the Persian Gulf Crisis,” *Village Voice*, September 1990.

72 Gretchen Baldwin, “‘Women and Children’ Never,” *Fellow Travelers*, October 30, 2018.

73 See, for example, Niamh Reilly, “How Ending Impunity for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Overwhelmed the UN Women, Peace, and Security Agenda: A Discursive Genealogy,” *Violence Against Women* 24, no. 6 (2018); and Marsha Henry, “Ten Reasons Not To Write Your Master's Dissertation on Sexual Violence in War,” *Mats Utas*, June 11, 2013.

74 Henri Myrntinen, “Locating Masculinities in WPS,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security*.

75 David Duriesmith, “Engaging Men and Boys in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: Beyond the ‘Good Men’ Industry,” LSE Centre for Women, Peace and Security, November 2017.

76 See, for example: Kate Cronin-Furman, Nimmi Gowrinathan, and Rafia Zakaria, “Emissaries of Empowerment,” City College of New York, September 2017; Will Storr, “Interview: The Rape of Men: The Darkest Secret of War,” *The Guardian*, July 16, 2011; “From Syria to Congo, Male Victims of Sexual Violence in Conflict Neglected,” Thomson Reuters Foundation, March 23, 2017; Women's Refugee Commission, “It's Happening to Our Men as Well: Sexual Violence Against Rohingya Men and Boys,” November 2018.

77 See, for example: Kate Cronin-Furman, Nimmi Gowrinathan, and Rafia Zakaria, “Emissaries of Empowerment,” City College of New York, September 2017; Alexis Leanna Henshaw, Jessica Trisko Darden, and Ora Szekeley, *Insurgent Women* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press 2019); Fionnuala Ni Aoláin, “Rethinking the Women, Peace and Security Agenda through the Lens of Resistance,” *Just Security*, April 17, 2017; Jocelyn Viterna, “Radical or Righteous? Using Gender to Shape Public Perceptions of Political Violence,” in *Dynamics of Political Violence: A Process-Oriented Perspective on Radicalization and the Escalation of Political Conflict*, Lorenzo Bosi, Chares Demetriou, and Stefan Malthaner, eds. (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014); and Dara Kay Cohen, “Female Combatants and the Perpetration of Violence: Wartime Rape in the Sierra Leone Civil War,” *World Politics* 65, no. 3 (July 2013).

Another assumption is that women in host communities will be more likely to report violence to women peacekeepers based on their shared identity. However, this ignores intersecting factors such as both individuals' race and the power that a security force uniform confers on its wearer regardless of gender. While anecdotal evidence points to local women in some contexts feeling more comfortable reporting to or approaching uniformed women because of their gender presentation,⁷⁸ research has also shown that the perception of and trust in security forces is often gender-neutral.⁷⁹ Host communities "are more likely to see the uniform before the sex of the peacekeeper."⁸⁰ In fact, experts have noted that in some contexts women may even be more likely to report violence to men than to women because of assumptions about the amount of power a man has versus a woman, regardless of their respective military roles.⁸¹

The conflation of women and children underlines the reductive view that women do not have agency in their own safety and protection and thus need to be protected.

Conversely, a "third gender" phenomenon has been witnessed in certain conflict contexts, whereby women soldiers end up commanding respect from men in societies that normally enforce a strict gender hierarchy. This happens when the masculine uniform on a feminine body places those soldiers outside of—or in between—typical sociocultural constraints and gives them "greater military access to, understanding, and inclusion of the whole community."⁸²

Framing civilian protection needs as gender-binary—for example, predominantly citing women as victims of sexual violence—necessarily leads to a gender-binary response. This risks siloing the roles

of women and men peacekeepers in the name of short-term operational effectiveness at the expense of a whole-of-system, community-centered response.

Emerging Findings

A number of studies have found that UN peace operations have made positive contributions to the countries they operate in, including by containing civil wars and large-scale conflicts and by increasing the success and staying power of peace processes.⁸³ Nevertheless, peacekeeping military contingents also mirror the heavily masculine

national-level military structures that deploy them. Madeleine Rees refers to this as the "gendered hierarchy" of international peace and security, which has historically excluded women and tended toward "hard" security issues, including the regulation and supply of guns and the negoti-

ation of borders."⁸⁴ Many argue that this male-dominated peacekeeping system is not working, particularly when it comes to community engagement.⁸⁵ Nonetheless, discussions around increasing the operational effectiveness of peacekeeping focus on gender almost exclusively through the lens of the "added value" of women in peace operations, while the added value of men goes unquestioned.⁸⁶ The burden continues to fall on uniformed women to prove their worth.

IPI's WPS program is conducting ongoing research on all the topics laid out in this issue brief. To conclude, we offer initial findings from that

78 IPI roundtables, New York, October 2 and November 1, 2019.

79 See, for example, Sabrina Karim, "Relational State Building in Areas of Limited Statehood: Experimental Evidence on the Attitudes of the Police," *American Political Science Review* (2020), p. 547. Karim finds that "when women [in rural Liberia] were visited by female police officers, there was no added improvement in perceptions of the police among local females." She also learned that "similarly, local men's opinions about the police did not improve after visits by male police officers."

80 Nina Wilén, "What's the 'Added Value' of Male Peacekeepers? (Or—Why We Should Stop Instrumentalising Female Peacekeepers' Participation)," Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations, February 2020, p. 3.

81 IPI roundtables, New York, October 4 and November 1, 2019.

82 Rosie Stone "The 3rd Sex: Gender and Contemporary Conflict," *Wavell Room*, January 29, 2019.

83 Lise Morjé Howard, *Power in Peacekeeping* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

84 Madeleine Rees, foreword to *Rethinking Peacekeeping: Discourse, Memory, Translation, and Dialogue*, eds. Alexander Laban Hinton, Giorgio Shani, and Jeremiah Alberg (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2019), p. ix.

85 IPI roundtables, New York, October 2 and October 4, 2019.

86 Wilén, "What's the 'Added Value' of Male Peacekeepers?"

research, guidance for researchers and practitioners who work on these issues, and considerations for UN policymakers pushing for gender balance and an increase in women's participation in all levels of UN peacekeeping. This project strives to push against existing assumptions and norms to consider transformative possibilities in UN peacekeeping and the UN's goals around women's participation—both quantitative and qualitative.

Grounding Integration Strategies in Evidence

Strategies to increase uniformed women's participation in peace operations must be rooted in concrete data rather than anecdotes whenever possible—even when those anecdotes are based on professional experience and field deployment. However, as this paper itself shows, moving beyond anecdotal evidence is difficult, and the process of gathering long-term data often conflicts with peace operations' need to take quick and decisive action. Officials need a holistic understanding of the value of nuanced gender analysis and gender-sensitive policy approaches in place of arbitrary benchmarks to check off. They also need analysis of how both male and female peacekeepers enhance operational effectiveness, as the focus has too often been on women as a standalone interest group and demographic responsible for change.⁸⁷ So far, IPI's research indicates that there are particularly gaps when it comes to translating uniformed women's lived experiences into policy and in monitoring on-the-ground progress against rhetorical goals on both the qualitative and quantitative participation of women in peace operations.

Missions must assist UN headquarters and researchers in building an evidence base through

robust reporting. New initiatives like the Office of Military Affairs' training of engagement platoons have largely been based on anecdotal evidence, and the fieldwork meant to inform that training has been indefinitely delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Requiring FETs to robustly report on their activities, however ad hoc, will help to determine their effectiveness and can inform future community engagement strategies and community-based protection efforts. Such reporting is also necessary by police components, which seem to have been the subject of less scrutiny.

Standardizing the collection of gender-disaggregated data from missions is critical to upending rationales for women's participation that "lack empirical backing and risk perpetuating 'essentialist' understandings of men and women."⁸⁸ Such data could also help the UN move away from framing uniformed women in military and police contingents as role models for local women. This "role models" perspective advances the idea that all

or most women share motivations and ideologies and will place their gender identity and solidarity with other women above all other motivating factors.⁸⁹

Nina Wilén recently wrote about the need to "transform gender-biased institutions without reinforcing gender stereotypes."⁹⁰ One way that researchers can contribute to this goal is by studying both female and male peacekeepers in both qualitative and quantitative research. In this way, they can gather comparative data and address gendered assumptions, challenges, and concerns across contingents without reinforcing the idea that "gender" is the same as "women." Such research can lay the foundation for policies that steer away from lumping uniformed women into a siloed, homogenous group and instead address the gender-based concerns of both men and women.

Women have a right to deploy in any capacity and at every level of UN peace operations.

87 See: Sahana Dharmapuri, "Not Just a Numbers Game: Increasing Women's Participation in UN Peacekeeping," International Peace Institute, July 2013; and Wilén, "What's the 'Added Value' of Male Peacekeepers?"

88 *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security*, Chapter 17, p. 215.

89 Rupesinghe, Stamnes, and Karlsrud, "WPS and Female Peacekeepers." The authors point out that conservative ideologies and career ambitions are two factors that confound the assumption that women's motivations to deploy are homogenous.

90 Wilén, "What's the 'Added Value' of Male Peacekeepers?"

Transforming Missions to Improve the Experiences of Women Peacekeepers

The continuing disparities between men and women during deployment in terms of accommodations, available health resources, protection equipment, and basic expectations of physical and mental safety are leadership failures. They are a violation of a women's right to deploy, not a reason to avoid deploying women.⁹¹ Women have a right to deploy in any capacity and at every level of UN peace operations, and support from leadership is essential to achieving equity.

Some integration initiatives are already addressing these disparities, including the Elsie Initiative Fund's "gender-strong" units.⁹² The requirement that T/PCCs receiving this funding create equitable deployment conditions for their units as they increase women's participation addresses many of the struggles voiced by uniformed women. Other similar initiatives could help bolster calls for numerical increases in the number of women peacekeepers with substantive, holistic attention to gender mainstreaming and equitable policies, and encourage T/PCCs not to overlook women for leadership roles. The rigorous reporting requirements for gender-strong units will be valuable in future research and policy writing, as they create an important, written record of this participation strategy.

Perhaps most importantly, the mechanisms currently in place to prevent and address sexual harassment and abuse of uniformed women within peacekeeping missions need to be strengthened. Online modules are a box-ticking exercise that cannot adequately address behaviors that may be ingrained in individuals or national militaries. Attention to this issue must be imbedded into campaigns to increase uniformed women's participation in peace operations, not least because some women interviewed for this research say that their

experiences with harassment are deterring them from redeploying. In particular, calls for increasing the participation of uniformed women as part of a strategy to decrease sexual exploitation and abuse of civilians are misguided. Priority should be given to examining the culture within missions that puts these women at risk of sexual or physical assault by their colleagues.

Implementing a Gendered Approach to Community Engagement and Protection

While WPS is now routinely included in peacekeeping mandates, it is often included as a virtue-signaling add-on. In practice, WPS mandates are often treated as talking points, only taken seriously at the mission level, or implemented in an ad hoc manner.⁹³ Research has also shown that adding more detail on WPS when renewing mandates does not necessarily allow for "any new actions that could not have been done under the previous mandates."⁹⁴ This calls for more robust reporting on ad hoc activities, coupled with methodical analysis of lessons learned and integration of these lessons into missions' strategies.

Ultimately, WPS-centered mandates should drive missions' protection strategies from the beginning. Peace operations and peacekeepers have a significant impact on the communities they operate in. Paying attention to the full scope of a community's needs by including it in planning gives peacekeepers a more holistic understanding of the conflict environment. To do this, gendered analysis that pushes policies beyond gender-essentialist expectations is critical. Peacekeepers involved in community engagement should ask questions such as: Are there women combatants in non-state armed groups? Are women deployed with the national military? Are men being targeted for recruitment to non-state armed groups? And how are women, men, and children experiencing gender-based or sexual violence? Peacekeeping

91 The authors thank Callum Watson for making this point during the review process. See also: *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Art. 21(2): "Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his (sic) country."

92 Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, "Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations"; UN Women, "The Elsie Initiative Fund Launched to Increase Uniformed Women in UN Peacekeeping," March 29, 2019.

93 IPI roundtables, New York, October 2 and November 1, 2019, and January 24, 2020.

94 Dönges and Kullenberg, "What Works (and Fails) in Protection," p. 165.

strategies that incorporate the perspectives of host communities can ensure missions are held accountable to goals defined by those communities rather than generic military objectives and policies.

The UN has an opportunity to implement a gendered approach to community engagement and protection. The 2020 POC Handbook, for example, states that both the WPS and the POC mandates are the responsibility of all personnel, not just women.⁹⁵ However, the handbook still often groups “women and children” in the same category, a choice that reinforces stereotypes that women are victims and that “civilian” is a category that excludes men. Future policies, protection strategies, and research on this topic should acknowledge the wide scope of both victimhood and violence. This requires going beyond the uncritical addition of “men and boys” throughout resolutions and mandates, as has happened in recent years, including within the WPS agenda itself. Such additions “[run] the risk of stabilizing and ‘updating’ a patriarchal status quo rather than questioning it.”⁹⁶

There is a need for in-depth, nuanced research aimed at sustainably increasing women’s participation in ways that do not essentialize gender and place women into situations where they are simply expected to act like men.

Looking Ahead: The COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond

Beyond the challenges discussed above, peace operations will continue to face emerging threats with gendered implications. Chief among these is the COVID-19 pandemic. Already, peace operations are having to reprioritize their activities to decide which “are critical and need to continue as normal” and which “are important but not critical and... can be paused until the crisis is over.”⁹⁷ As peace operations shift their priorities toward the COVID-19 response, mission leaders might be tempted to

forgo gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive responses, and funding could be directed away from gender-related work. This temptation makes it even more necessary for missions to institutionalize gender-sensitive responses and practices.

At the same time, some have also pointed out that the rotation freezes and prolonged deployments brought on in response to the pandemic “provide an incentive for contingents to finally address the gendered division of labor and shift roles to a more equitable sharing of responsibilities.”⁹⁸ However, the mechanisms by which this could happen are as yet unclear.⁹⁹ As Robert Ulrich Nagel and Melanne Verveer point out, “Longer deployments will likely lead to fatigue, decreased morale and increased stress. This could hurt daily peacekeeping operations, compromising the security of both local populations and peacekeeping troops and jeopardizing the operations’ usefulness.”¹⁰⁰ Indeed, given the harassment and abuse uniformed women can experience within missions, prolonged deployments could pose a greater threat to peacekeepers who may already be struggling.

As peace operations shift their objectives to incorporate the longer-term pandemic response and world leaders call for that response to put the WPS agenda at its center,¹⁰¹ gender analysis of conflicts and health security will be critical.¹⁰² The pandemic has exposed fissures in social structures and institutions worldwide, and there will be no going back to the old normal. This perspective holds for UN peacekeeping. Going forward, every analysis of the transformative potential of peacekeeping must discuss gender mainstreaming, women’s participation, and the full spectrum of gendered host-community concerns.

95 UN Department of Peace Operations, “The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping: Handbook,” p. 156.

96 Myrtilinen, “Locating Masculinities in WPS,” p. 93.

97 Cedric de Coning, “The Impact of COVID-19 on Peace Operations,” *IPI Global Observatory*, April 2, 2020.

98 Robert Ulrich Nagel and Melanne Verveer, “What the Pandemic Means for UN Peacekeeping Work,” *PassBlue*, April 8, 2020.

99 Ibid.

100 Ibid.

101 IPI policy forum on “Safeguarding Civilians during a Pandemic.”

102 Saram Naraghi Anderlini, “Women Peace and Security in the Time of Corona,” London School of Economics and Politics, March 25, 2020.

As the UN continues to emphasize the importance of women in peace operations, there is a need for in-depth, nuanced research aimed at sustainably increasing women's participation in ways that do not essentialize gender and place women into situations where they are simply expected to act like men. This research will need to adopt a broad,

gendered approach that includes both men and women. It will also need to focus on substantial contributions rather than simple increases in numbers, expand beyond missions into host communities, and back anecdotal evidence with comprehensive, measurable data that spans multiple contexts.

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