Gender Trainings in International Peace and Security: Toward a More Effective Approach

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Executive Summary

As more and more states and organizations adopt a gendered approach to international policy, trainings on how to conduct gender-based analysis and integrate gender perspectives into policies and programming have proliferated. These trainings vary widely in their target audience and format. They also vary in their institutional origin: some are designed by international or regional organizations like the UN or NATO, some by institutions associated with states, and some by third-party NGOs, training institutes, and academic institutions.

Despite this increase in gender trainings, it remains unclear how effective they have been due to challenges related to their design, delivery, targeting, and evaluation. On design, gender trainings often have difficulty striking the right balance between normative and strategic considerations and between theory and practice. They also tend to conflate gender, women's inclusion, and sex-related issues. The method of delivering trainings can also pose gendered barriers to participants' access.

On delivery, the challenge is finding experts who understand gender, can speak to the specific issues that require a gender perspective, and are familiar with how to apply this perspective in field operations. On targeting, the challenge is identifying participants who are likely to make good use of the training and tailoring the training's content and method of delivery to their needs. Finally, all gender training faces a daunting challenge with regard to evaluation, as it is difficult to observe socialization and changes in beliefs and practices in the short term.

These challenges call for greater rigor in the design, delivery, and assessment of gender trainings to make them more coherent and effective. Toward this end, those designing gender trainings should consider the following:

- Conducting a preliminary needs assessment to adapt trainings to their audience;
- Soliciting feedback at every stage of the training, including "live" feedback during the training;
- Grounding training in local contexts and providing evidence to back up claims; and,
- Generating self-reflection by both participants and trainers during evaluations.

Introduction

Ever since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 and the publication of a World Bank report on "engendering development" the following year, the integration of gender perspectives into international security and development has been seen as essential.[1] More recently, some countries have followed in the footsteps of Sweden, which was the first country to adopt a feminist foreign policy in 2014. In November 2017, Canada launched a revised national action plan on women, peace, and security for 2017–2022, the centerpiece of its feminist foreign policy. In the past five years, Australia, France, New Zealand, Norway, and the United Kingdom have also made significant shifts toward a gendered approach to international policy. Many international and regional organizations have followed suit, as have many think tanks and NGOs.

All of these actors have adopted policies and developed programs to train their personnel on conducting gender-based analysis plus and integrating gender perspectives into all policies and programming.[2] In spite of these laudable efforts, it remains unclear how effective these trainings have been, partly due to inadequate evaluation. To what extent is gender training in the field of international peace and security achieving its stated objectives?

This paper maps the ecosystem of gender trainings in the realm of international peace and security. Then it identifies challenges related to the design, delivery, targeting, and evaluation of gender trainings. It concludes with a set of recommendations for improving these trainings. The paper draws on the authors' observations from the many trainings in which they have participated.

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Locating Gender in the Training Ecosystem

The past decade has seen a marked increase in gender trainings, understood as both existing training modules adapted to integrate gender-related content and stand-alone training programs focused on gender. The dizzying variety of trainings precludes a strict classification. Broadly speaking, however, the trainings vary in terms of their target audience, format, and origin.

In terms of the audience, some trainings are offered to mixed-gender participants, while others target women; some are designed as programs for individuals in leadership positions, while others are offered across the organization. In terms of the format, some are offered online, others in person; some last a few hours, while others are a week-long; some are stand-alone, and others ongoing. As for the origin, trainings can be designed by the beneficiary (whether an international or regional organization such as the UN, EU, or NATO, a state, or an NGO), by a third party contracted for the purpose (often an NGO, civil society organization, think tank, or university), or jointly by the beneficiary and a third party.[3]

This section maps the main gender trainings in the realm of international peace and security, focusing on trainings offered by international organizations (NATO and the UN) and by specialized NGOs and civil society organizations, as well as the key state-led initiatives.

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1 UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (October 31, 2000), UN Doc. S/RES/1325; World Bank, "Engendering Development through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice," January 2001.

2 Gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) refers to "an analytical process used to assess how diverse groups of women, men and non-binary people may experience policies, programs and initiatives. The 'plus' in GBA+ acknowledges that GBA goes beyond biological (sex) and socio-cultural (gender) differences. We all have multiple identity factors that intersect to make us who we are; GBA+ also considers many other identity factors, like race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical disability." Status of Women Canada, "What Is GBA+?" December 14, 2018, available at https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/gba-acs/index-en.html .

3 Third parties that have designed trainings include the International Civil Society Action Network, Folke Bernadotte Academy, Chr. Michelsen Institute, Peace Research Institute Oslo, International Peace Institute, London School of Economics, and Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH) Zürich.

Initiatives by International and Regional Organizations

NATO's Bi-strategic Command Directive 40-1, last updated in 2017, requires all NATO troops that will be engaging with local populations during operations to be trained on Security Council Resolution 1325 and gender perspectives prior to deployment. In line with this directive, NATO offers the "Gender Education & Training Package for Nations," which provides guidance to states and partners and offers best practices and advice on how to institutionalize gender perspectives. NATO also trains and employs gender advisers, who provide advice to NATO commanders on how to integrate gender perspectives into operations and missions, crisis and conflict analyses, concepts, doctrines, procedures, and education and trainings.

At the UN, the UN Department of Peace Operations and Department of Operational Support integrate gender equality and women, peace, and security into all areas of their work and offer a number of training programs. In the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Mediation Support Unit cooperates with the Peace Research Institute Oslo and the Chr. Michelsen Institute to offer a gender and mediation course that targets senior officials in special political and peacekeeping missions as well as individuals identified as likely to be selected for those positions. The Mediation Support Unit also offers a gender and mediation course for mid-level personnel in the department (P3–P5 level).

UN Women offers a variety of gender training courses for peacekeepers, including a "Female Military Officers' Course" and a course on "Mainstreaming Gender in UN Peacekeeping to End Conflict-Related Sexual Violence." UN Women's Training Centre eLearning Campus functions as a global online platform for trainings on gender equality, offering self-paced, moderated, blended, face-to-face, and customizable courses. These include a course from the Inter-Agency

Standing Committee that provides guidance on applying a gender-equality approach to humanitarian programming.[4]

State Initiatives

A number of states have established think tanks, institutes, or centers focused on bridging the gap between research and practice in the realm of international peace and security. Although these are independent institutions meant to remain at arm's length from the government, many have their respective government as a shareholder (e.g., the Zentrum für Internationale Friedenseinsätze in Germany), their main funder (e.g., the US Institute of Peace, Swisspeace, and the Folke Bernadotte Academy in Sweden), or their main partner. They have all entered into the fray of gender trainings and service mostly civilians. Some states have also established specialized peacekeeping training centers or institutes focused on enhancing the knowledge and operational capacity of police and troops serving in peace operations.

At the US Institute of Peace, the online "Gender Inclusivity in Peacebuilding" course "explores the impact of conflict on gender identity, norms, and roles and how gender equality can create transformative opportunities for peace."[5] Swisspeace offers the "Gender, Conflict & Peacebuilding Course," which "examines the relationship between gender, violent conflict, and peacebuilding." Participants are taught to "consider how war and militarism are highly gendered phenomena that impact men and women differently, and… how peacebuilding processes account for gendered dynamics."[6]

The Zentrum für Internationale Friedenseinsätze (ZIF) provides a course entitled "Women, Peace & Security Reloaded: Gender-Sensitive Approaches in Peace Missions." This course provides knowledge, tools, and skills on "gender-sensitive approaches in the context of EU, UN, OSCE [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe] and other peace missions."[7] In Sweden, the Folke Bernadette

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4 UN Women Training Centre, "IASC e-Learning on Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action," available at https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/enrol/index.php?9d=174 .

5 US Institute of Peace, "Gender Inclusivity in Peacebuilding: Micro-Course," available at https://www.usip.org/academy/catalog/gender-inclusivity-peacebuilding-micro-course .

6 Swisspeace, "Gender, Conflict & Peacebuilding Course," available at https://www.swisspeace.ch/continuing-education/postgraduate-courses/genderconflict-and-peacebuilding-course .

7 ZIF, "Women, Peace & Security Reloaded: Gender-Sensitive Approaches in Peace Missions," available at https://www.zif-berlin.org/en/training/zif-training-courses/specialization-courses/women-peace-security-reloaded-gender-sensitive-approaches-in-peace-missions.html .

Academy offers a course for current or prospective civilian gender advisers or gender focal points in international peace operations, political missions, crisis-management missions, and peace and security organizations.[8] Participants are provided with knowledge on the realities of integrating gender perspectives into these missions.

Established by the Ghana Ministry of Defense in 2004, the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre is one of three centers of excellence mandated by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to offer training for personnel deployed to peacekeeping and peace support operations in Africa. It offers a number of gender trainings, including a course aiming to strengthen the capacity of security agencies and civil society to prevent and handle sexual exploitation and abuse. Another training seeks to raise awareness among security forces of the consequences of conflict-related sexual violence, share practices and tools to prevent and respond to such incidents, and provide an understanding of legal frameworks and accountability mechanisms. Finally, it offers a training on investigating sexual and gender-based violence for police personnel with relevant experience who will be assigned to UN, AU, or ECOWAS peacekeeping operations.[9]

Italy's Multinational CIMIC Group, a civil-military cooperation unit of NATO, offers a "Female Engagement Team Course" to provide knowledge on gender perspectives and Security Council Resolution 1325. The course focuses on Afghanistan, covering Afghan history, religion, and culture. Intended for members of female engagement teams operating at the tactical level, the course aims to help them engage with local female populations in support of operations. The course is open to civilians and military personnel from NATO member states and from non-NATO partners in the Partnership for Peace and Mediterranean Dialogue.[10] Also created by the Italian government, the Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units offers a course on support operations. Intended for senior police officers responsible for managing the gender file in peace operations, the training seeks to increase participants' understanding of gender-related issues and develop skills to investigate conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence in multidimensional peacekeeping missions.[11]

Established by the Swedish Armed Forces, the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations offers a seminar on gender for general and flag officers, ambassadors, and other senior-level civilian leaders. Participants are provided with an understanding of how to integrate—and advocate for the integration of—gender perspectives into the planning, execution, and evaluation of operations at the political and military levels. The center also offers a seminar on gender for those about to deploy or be appointed as commanding officers, chiefs of staff, or branch heads or to equivalent civilian positions. Participants are provided with skills to integrate a gender perspective into military operations, an understanding of how gender advisers and gender focal points can assist during operations, and knowledge of how a gender perspective can increase operational effectiveness.[12]

The Serbian Armed Forces offer a course on the protection of civilians in multinational operations that incorporates a gender perspective. The course aims to provide participants, who include national personnel who will be deployed to peace operations, with greater gender awareness and the skills needed to implement a gender perspective in peace operations. The course addresses the importance of involving female soldiers, police officers, and civilian staff in all aspects of operations.[13] In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Peace Support Operations Training Centre offers a course on the utility of

8　Folke Bernadotte Academy, "Specialization Course for Gender Advisers," available at
　　https://fba.se/en/how-we-work/courses/upcoming-courses/?eventID=1637360 .

9　See: KAIPTC, "All Training Courses," available at https://www.kaiptc.org/training/all-training-courses/ .

10　Multinational CIMIC Group, "Female Engagement Team Course," available at
　　https://www.cimicgroup.org/int/en/article/260/female-engagement-team-course-fet-01-20 .

11　Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units, "GP: Gender Protection in PSOs," available at https://www.coespu.org/courses/gp-gender-protection-psos .

12　Swedish Armed Forces, "Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations: Courses and Seminars at NCGM," available at
　　https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/en/swedint/nordic-centre-for-gender-in-military-operations/courses-at-ncgm-and-how-to-apply2/ .

13　Serbian Armed Forces, "Protection of Civilians and Gender in Multinational Operations," available at
　　http://www.vs.rs/en/article/A7B0366BFB2C11E5A7C800163E135070/protection-of-civilians-and-gender-in-mnops .

gender in peace support operations. Participants are provided with an understanding of how to apply a gender perspective in the security sector, the importance of a gender perspective in peace support operations, and how to prevent sexual violence in conflict. The training is intended for national and international military and police officers, high-level decision makers, and civilians who are likely to be deployed to peace support operations.[14]

In Turkey, the Turkish Partnership for Peace Training Center offers a course on gender awareness in peace support operations. Participants are introduced to the concept of gender perspectives, why they are important, and how they link to Security Council Resolution 1325. They are also instructed on concrete procedures and techniques for integrating gender perspectives into peace support operations. The course is intended for rank officers, civilians at the equivalent level, and NGO staff from NATO member states and non-NATO partners in the Partnership for Peace, Mediterranean Dialogue, Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, and Partners across the Globe. In Australia, the "Women, Peace and Security Educational Toolkit" is designed for military, police, and civilian personnel deploying to fragile and conflict-affected countries. The toolkit consists of a booklet that summarizes the women, peace, and security agenda and a CD designed as a tool for trainers and for self-study.[15]

Other Trainings

A number of other trainings are provided by NGOs and independent peacekeeping training institutes. The Human Rights Education Associates offer a range of courses on women's empowerment and gender equality in the peace and security sector. Its e-learning course on women, peace, and security "provides participants with an understanding of how a gender lens is critical to all elements of peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and recovery work, initiatives, and policy."[16] The online course on gender and humanitarian action "introduces staff of (international) development agencies and NGOs to the relevance of gender to humanitarian programming."[17]

The Better Peace Initiative of the International Civil Society Action Network has developed animations, discussion guides, and trainings on the inclusion of women peacebuilders. Offered to a variety of audiences, the training topics include gendered peace negotiations, gendered devolution, gendered transitional justice, and gendered community policing.[18] The Conflux Centre offers a "Gender Mainstreaming in Peace Operations and Gender Mainstreaming in Mediation" course, which focuses on gender mainstreaming at the operational and tactical levels in peace operations and mediation processes.[19]

Based in the US, the Peace Operations Training Institute, an independent entity, offers a variety of courses and programs on gender, peace, and security. These include a course on "Gender Perspectives in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations," which addresses "conceptual and operational issues involved in integrating a gender perspective into multidimensional peace operations."[20] In the course "Preventing Violence against Women and Gender Inequality in Peacekeeping," readings and case studies help peacekeeping personnel consider "how they, as individuals and as teams, can work to promote gender equality and to change attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate violence."[21] The course "Implementation of the UN

14 Peace Support Operations Training Centre, "Utility of Gender in Peace Support Operations Course," available at http://mod.gov.ba/OS_BIH/struktura/Komanda_za_podrsku/KOID/PSOTC/courses_and_seminars/?id=65191 .

15 Australian Development of Social Services, "Side by Side: Women, Peace and Security Educational Toolkit," available at https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02_2013/wps_toolkit.pdf .

16 Human Rights Education Associates, "Women, Peace, and Security," available at https://www.hrea.org/learn/elearning/women-peace-security/ .

17 Human Rights Education Associates, "Gender and Humanitarian Action," available at http:www.hrea.org/lear/elearning/gender-and-humanitarian-action/ .

18 See: International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN), "Better Peace Initiative: Promoting Inclusive and Gender Responsive Peace Processes," available at https://icanpeacework.org/our-work/better-peace-initiative/ .

19 Conflux Center, "Gender Mainstreaming in Peace Operations and Gender Mainstreaming in Mediation," available at https://www.confluxcenter.org/course/gender-mainstreaming-in-peace-perations-and-gender-mainstreaming-in-mediation/ .

20 Peace Operations Training Center, "Gender Perspectives in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations," available at https://www.peaceopstraining.org/courses/gender-perspectives-united-nations-peacekeeping-ops-v2-english/ .

21 Peace Operations Training Center, "Preventing Violence Against Women and Promoting Gender Equality in Peacekeeping," available at . https://www.peaceopstraining.org/courses/preventing-violence-against-women-english-2019/ .

Security Council Resolutions on the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in Africa" aims to raise awareness of the importance of these resolutions and build capacity to implement them at the regional and national levels.[22]

Lastly, the École de Maintien de la Paix Alioune Blondin Beye based in Bamako, Mali, offers a course on gender in peace support operations. This training seeks to enhance participants' understanding of how to incorporate gender perspectives into planning, implementing, and evaluating peace support operations. It also covers the gendered experience of conflict and opportunities and challenges to achieving gender equality in conflict resolution. Open to military personnel between the levels of captain and lieutenant-colonel and to civilians with equivalent levels of responsibility, it targets people deployed or about to be deployed to serve in peace operations or to conduct crisis-management activities in Africa.

Challenges in Designing, Delivering, Targeting, and Evaluating Gender Trainings

In spite of their variety, gender trainings in the realm of international peace and security face a number of similar challenges related to their design, delivery, targeting, and evaluation. On design, gender trainings often have difficulty striking the right balance between normative and strategic considerations and between theory and practice. On delivery, the challenge is finding experts who understand gender, can speak to the specific issues that require a gender perspective, and are familiar with the requirements of applying this perspective in field operations.[23] On targeting, the challenge is identifying participants who are likely to make good use of the training and to be changemakers. Finally, all gender training faces a

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Design Challenges

Three challenges can be identified regarding the design of gender trainings. The first relates to striking the right balance between norms, substantive thematic knowledge, and practical operational considerations. The second relates to the ongoing conflation of gender, women's inclusion, and sex-related issues. The third has to do with the method of delivering trainings.

Trying to Be All Things to All People

Most gender trainings attempt to achieve at least three interrelated objectives: (1) to introduce and socialize participants to the normative framework behind the push for a gender perspective on peace and security; (2) to familiarize participants with the manner in which a "gender-based analysis plus" changes their understanding of and approach to their area of thematic expertise (e.g., constitutional reform, peace negotiations, policing, justice, security sector reform, or protection of civilians in conflict); and (3) to derive a set of operational tools and principles for including women and integrating gender into their daily work.

Course designers thus often attempt to find the right balance between providing normative justification and background, discussing the implications of a gender perspective for participants' areas of expertise, and tackling the operational consequences of including a gender perspective in one's work. This challenge becomes all the more acute in courses designed to serve a wide range of participants with varying degrees of familiarity or conviction that a gender perspective would add value to their work.

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22 Peace Operations Training Center, "Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in Africa," available at https://www.peaceopstraining.org/courses/un-scrs-women-peace-and-security-africa/ .

23 Here we are not referring to gender focal points or advisers but career experts. Gender focal points and advisers are not necessarily gender experts, as these are often one-off appointments.

De-conflating Gender, Women's Inclusion, and Sex-Related Issues

Another challenge gender trainings face is how to avoid conflating gender, women's inclusion, and sex-related issues. Gender training for peace-keepers tends to overly focus on sex-related issues such as gender-based sexual violence and sexual exploitation and abuse. While these issues are important—and rampant—they fail to mention structural or institutional challenges or deficiencies with peacekeeping. On the other hand, gender training on mediation or peace negotiations often focuses on the structural or institutional barriers to women's inclusion, with much less emphasis on the impact of this inclusion on gender relations, including the increased insecurity of women who participate in politics.

Being Sensitive to Gendered Asymmetries in Access to Trainings

The method of delivering trainings is not always adapted to the participants' needs or mindful of whether those needs are themselves gendered. In contexts where female participants are constrained by traditional settings, including spousal and family duties, they may have more difficulty attending lengthy trainings or trainings conducted far from home. But at the same time, trainings farther from home may free these participants to engage more fully, speak more freely, and be more proactive during the training.

Online trainings can be one way to improve access for participants who operate under a set of constraints that may prevent their participation in in-person trainings. However, online trainings might offer more general material that cannot easily be applied to the audience's contexts. In peacekeeping missions with faltering Internet connections, online trainings might also be burdensome for participants by forcing them to stay longer at the office. In addition to being detrimental to the work-life balance of all participants, this may be especially problematic for women, who tend to be more at risk of harassment at night in high-risk environments.

Delivery Challenges

Issues surrounding training delivery include the difficulty of finding trainers who have sufficient familiarity with or knowledge of the operational requirements and constraints of field missions, can deliver data-driven (rather than anecdotal) training content, and have substantial expertise in both gender and thematic issues related to peace operations.

Focusing on the "What" Rather Than the "How"

When instructors lack adequate knowledge of the operational requirements and constraints of field missions, they tend to focus on presenting and discussing norms and policies rather than providing guidance on how practitioners can implement these best practices in their daily work. At best, this lack of contextualization fails to convince the audience about the necessity and relevance of the material presented; at worst, it can cause those who may be unconvinced about the need for integrating a gender perspective to feel a sense of "normative imposition." It can also deepen the divide between "cookie-cutter" policies that fail to take into account local contexts and actors and those responsible for implementing these policies. Trainers need to understand the reality of working in field missions in order to present norms and policies in such a way that participants can begin to think about how to adapt them to their contexts.

Presenting Anecdotes as Data

Gender trainings attempt to socialize peace and security practitioners to the importance of integrating gender perspectives into their work. However, these attempts run the risk of using examples as evidence and anecdotes as data. In one training on gender, for instance, an "expert" stated that "women naturally confide more to other women." However, data from field research has

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shown that, in some cases, women share information based on their assessment of who is most likely to offer them protection. Thus in some instances, women prefer confiding in men if they see the latter as more likely to protect them.[24] In another training, the instructor stated that "men were more easily recruited to armed groups than women." Yet in some instances, research has shown that as many women as men have volunteered to join armed groups.[25] If trainings convey broad, anecdotal assumptions without embracing complexity and nuance, they risk opening themselves up to criticism and setting back the entire agenda.

Using Gender-Blind Subject-Matter Trainers

It is particularly difficult to identify trainers with both gender expertise and the skills and tools to convey these principles or norms to a variety of audiences. Trainers are often selected on the basis of their gender rather than their competency on gender issues. Hence, most trainers on gender tend to be women, not all of whom have gender expertise or the pedagogical tools and skills required. This can undermine one of the messages of gender trainings by further conflating women and gender. Trainers can also be chosen for their subject-matter rather than their gender expertise when a training aims to provide a gender perspective on a specific topic. However, experts in that topic may not have expertise on gender—a particular challenge in subjects dominated by men (e.g., cease-fires).

Lack of adequate gender expertise on the part of the trainers blurs a training's content and limits its utility in fostering or sustaining a gendered approach. It also limits training to a basic level that is inadequate for senior audiences. This may lead to trainers using clichés about feminine or masculine attributes and gender-binary vocabulary that equates gender with biological characteristics. In one training, for instance, the instructor asked a senior audience to comment on whether they agreed that women were more caring then men and men were braver than women. In another training, the instructor started the session by saying that it was well-known that there were more similarities among men and among women than between men and women. In the former case, such a question was meant to disabuse the participants of this notion, and in the latter, to reinforce this understanding. In either case, such statements are reductive and fail to sensitize audiences to more complex issues such as how gender intersects with other identities, issues, and inequalities.

Targeting Challenges

Gender training is also prone to two types of targeting challenges: getting the right participants in the room and tailoring the content and method of delivery to the audience at hand.

Identifying the Right Audience

Identifying and selecting training participants can be a vexing challenge. Many self-selected participants see training as an exercise in résumé-building rather than as a way to improve their practice and behavior or as a vehicle for change. Given the normative importance of integrating gender perspectives, participants may also attend gender trainings to tick a box and claim the associated credentials.

Other problems with audience selection stem from the field of peace and security. It is commonplace for training outfits not to have a complete list of participants until the last minute, as the organizations or states sending these participants are reluctant to release key personnel, particularly in the face of impending crises. While particularly acute with high-level participants, this problem is also observable with mid-career staffers. It is especially prevalent in organizations with limited human resources, such as subregional organizations.

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24 Testimonies of local population in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2017) and Mali (2019). See also: Kathleen M. Jennings, "Conditional Protection? Sex, Gender, and Discourse in UN Peacekeeping," *International Studies Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (2019).

25 Jessica Trisko Darden, Alexis Henshaw, and Ora Szekely, *Insurgent Women: Female Combatants in Civil Wars* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2019).

Tailoring the Content and Method of Delivery

Gender training serves different purposes for different participants at different times. States, international organizations, and think tanks are driven by different motivations and work under varying constraints in terms of time and resources as they design and deliver trainings. When the motivation of course designers is mainly normative and they are working under severe resource and time constraints, there is greater risk that they will adopt a cookie-cutter approach. As with any training, the challenge is to tailor the content and method of delivery to the targeted audience. This requires trainers to take into account the experience and needs of participants, their seniority and rank, and their prior understanding of the issues.

Evaluation Challenges

The final challenge relates to the evaluation of gender trainings, of the training participants, and of the trainers. Current methods and modalities of evaluation fail to adequately assess three areas: (1) the extent to which the training impacts the practices of the audience in the short and long term; (2) whether the training enables participants to develop competencies that are applicable to their field of work; and (3) how well the participants engaged in the training and, in turn, how adequately trainers adapted the training to their needs.

The field of evaluation is complex, and developing an appropriate way to assess trainings is a delicate matter. To begin with, there is a need to determine the factors one is attempting to evaluate. The phrasing of questions and the objectives behind each of them affect the answers received and, ultimately, the lessons learned. Another challenge is how to collect, collate, and evaluate the answers provided by participants. The timing of the evaluation (e.g., during or after a training) and its method and format (e.g., multiple-choice, short- or long-answer, paper or online, anonymous or identified) can affect the depth, accuracy, and positivity or negativity of answers.

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Finally, training evaluations tend to focus on the design and delivery of trainings. Trainers and trainees are often not requested to self-assess, which reinforces the passive role of participants and fails to acknowledge a training's dynamics. It also fails to measure the extent to which trainers adapt to their audience or the factors that contribute to audiences seeing trainers or trainings as credible.

Recommendations

The gender training ecosystem is becoming crowded. This paper has provided a bird's-eye view of this ecosystem and reflected on recurring challenges. One overarching concern is the substantial variation in the way trainings are designed and delivered. Another is the uncertainty over whether gender trainings are effective in achieving their stated goals. This calls for greater rigor in the design, delivery, and assessment of these trainings to make them more coherent and effective. The following recommendations, taken together, provide a baseline methodology for bringing this rigor to gender trainings in the field of international peace and security.

Conducting a Preliminary Needs Assessment

Whether trainers are designing a gender training from scratch or updating an existing training, they should carry out a needs assessment to ensure the training package is relevant for participants. The client, typically a representative of an organization requesting the training, sets parameters for trainers in terms of the location, budget, and size of the audience and might specify some learning outcomes or training materials. If this information is not communicated, it is incumbent upon trainers to request it to ensure that the training provided meets the client's expectations. This initial communication is also an opportunity for trainers to shape those expectations and receive feedback. Submitting a training proposal, for example, can

clarify what kind of gender training will be delivered and how it will address the initial request for training.

Beyond understanding the organization's needs, a needs assessment can also help familiarize trainers with their audience so trainers can tailor or adapt the training content accordingly. Even superficial knowledge about the audience, such as its size or level of seniority, can dramatically change a trainer's strategy, both in terms of content and the way the material is presented. Understanding participants' day-to-day routines is also funda-mental to making the training relevant to their work. Identifying specific challenges presented by their working environments through preparatory conversations, surveys, or focus groups is ideal if time and resources permit. When such information is not readily available, reading secondary materials about the organization and its mission can provide important context.

Soliciting Feedback, Including during Trainings

Soliciting feedback at every stage—design, delivery, and assessment—is important to make sure a gender training is responsive to the intended community. It is also useful in the longer term to help update the training, since content can become stale and the needs of an organization can shift over time, including due to leadership or staffing changes.

Once the course materials have been designed and are ready for delivery, trainers will also be able to gain "live" feedback from the audience. Participants offer verbal cues (e.g., spontaneous questions or comments), exhibit body language (either passive or active), and engage with different levels of intensity or interest. It is useful to have a notetaker to record these dynamics while the training is in progress. Experienced trainers will be able to adapt the course based on those cues.

Grounding Content in Local Contexts and Evidence

Regarding the content of trainings, trainers should avoid statements about gender that are framed as universal truths. For example, statements about the

need for more female peacekeepers in order to access local women should be put in context. Why is this the case? How might these dynamics differ from one mission setting to another? What context-specific factors impact the host state's engagement with women? Grounding content in local contexts, as opposed to recycling slogans on why gender matters, is a good strategy to avoid essentializing the roles women and men play in conflict and post-conflict settings. Trainers should also revisit overused examples and assumptions drawn from other contexts, particularly NATO's experience in Afghanistan (e.g., the assumption that the deployment of female engagement teams is appropriate in all contexts).

Providing evidence for the claims made in trainings not only helps contextualize the content but also makes for more compelling presentations. Such evidence can be socioeconomic data about the host-state population, testimonies from personnel in the field, interviews with key leaders, or analyses of trends over the course of the mission's lifespan. This can also help dismantle myths and tackle conscious and unconscious gender biases.

Generating Self-Reflection by Participants and Trainers

Handing out surveys to participants at the end of gender trainings is common practice. The trainers or the organizations mandating the training usually want to collect data about the appropriateness of the training and participants' retention of the material. While it is worthwhile asking participants to rate the trainers' abilities, the intelligibility of the content, and the value of interactive exercises, it is sometimes difficult to assess retention, especially if surveys are delivered right after the training session. A follow-up survey is also often sent to participants several weeks after the training to assess their retention and the relevance of the content to their practical experiences. While response rates tend to be low, the feedback collected is still valuable for improving the course. In some cases, trainers may interact with the same audience on multiple occasions, which provides the perfect opportunity to measure participants' retention of the material and their progress vis-à-vis the learning objectives over time. Whether the evaluation surveys are done in person or remotely,

they should also include a question that will generate self-reflection (e.g., asking participants to identify their own contribution to the course to better understand their engagement level).

What is missing from the assessment phase is a self-assessment questionnaire for the trainers. Such a questionnaire would help trainers think critically about the course content and delivery while the experience is still fresh in their minds. This could help improve the training package and inform any subsequent reporting to or meetings with the organization that requested the training.

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