The Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces

2022 Report on Results of the Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) Assessment

November 2022

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors from Cornell GSS Lab and the National Research Institution based on the best available information they have.

The report does not necessarily reflect the views of the Republic of the Sierra Leone Armed Forces, UN Women, the EIF, the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations.

The Republic of the Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) have provided corrections or clarifications during the validation workshop. The present report has been validated by the Republic of the Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) and integrates the feedback and insights of a representative group of the Republic of the Sierra Leone Armed Forces.
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>AFRSL</td>
<td>Armed Forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMISOM</td>
<td>African Union Mission in Somalia</td>
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<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDS</td>
<td>Chief of Defense Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCAF</td>
<td>Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>DHQ</td>
<td>Defense Headquarters</td>
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<td>DPO</td>
<td>UN Department for Peace Operations</td>
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<td>ECOWAS</td>
<td>Economic Community of West African States</td>
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<tr>
<td>FFF</td>
<td>Fact-Finding Form (See section 3 on methodology)</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMATT</td>
<td>International Military Advisory Training Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>JFC</td>
<td>Joint Force Command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSC</td>
<td>Joint Support Command</td>
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<tr>
<td>MINUSCA</td>
<td>United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission In C.A.R.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINUSMA</td>
<td>United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali</td>
</tr>
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<td>MOWIP</td>
<td>Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations barrier assessment methodology</td>
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<td>MOD</td>
<td>Ministry of Defense</td>
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<tr>
<td>PMTC</td>
<td>Peacekeeping Military Training Center</td>
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<td>RSLAF</td>
<td>Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces</td>
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<td>RWAFF</td>
<td>Royal West African Frontier Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSLMF</td>
<td>Royal Sierra Leone Military Forces</td>
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<td>SEA</td>
<td>Sexual Exploitation and Abuse</td>
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<td>SGBV</td>
<td>Sexual and Gender-Based Violence</td>
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<td>SLA</td>
<td>Sierra Leone Army</td>
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<td>SLAW</td>
<td>Sierra Leone Air Wing</td>
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<td>SSR</td>
<td>Security Sector Reform</td>
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<tr>
<td>TPCCs</td>
<td>Troop- and Police- Contributing Countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNAMSIL</td>
<td>United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone</td>
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<td>UNIFIL</td>
<td>United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon</td>
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<td>UNISFA</td>
<td>United Nations Interim Security Forces for Abyei</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNMISS</td>
<td>United Nations Mission in South Sudan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSCR</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council Resolution</td>
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<td>WAFF</td>
<td>West African Frontier Force</td>
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1) Executive summary

The Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) assessment for the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) examines the RSLAF’s ability to deploy women to, and ensure their meaningful participation in, United Nations (UN) peace operations through ten issue areas. It used four data collection tools: a fact-finding form (FFF), key decision-maker interviews, a focus group with women personnel, and a survey. The assessment team undertook the data collection for this project from November 2021 to February 2022.

a) Top good practices that can be shared and replicated elsewhere

- The RSLAF has attempted different ways to recruit women and deploys higher rates of women than men (Issue Area 1)
- The RSLAF engaged in efforts to integrate women and men into trainings and social activities (Issue Area 9)
- There are strong institutions to support women such as professionalization networks (Issue Area 1 and 8)
- RSLAF initiated focus groups with women that enabled deeper understanding of the challenges that women face

b) Top barriers to women’s meaningful participation in UN deployments

- There is a lack of women in senior leadership roles (Issue Area 1) and limited access to trainings
- There is a lack of childcare facilities and accommodations for new mothers/pregnancy (Issue Area 4)
- Women face health challenges that make retention difficult (Issue Area 1 and 4)
- There is no independence of the reporting mechanisms within the institution for harassment and other misconduct (Issue Area 10)

c) Top recommendations to overcome the barriers

- Establishing positive measures/quotas to promote women’s inclusion and reinforce their performance through courses and trainings that facilitate access to promotions
- Development of spaces, facilities, policies for new/nursing mothers and pregnant women
- Conduct a gendered needs assessment and address the specific health challenges of women
- Invest in training female medical practitioners (e.g. nurses and doctors) who could be deploy with contingents in the future
2) Introduction

a) Rationale

This MOWIP methodology fits within the broader goals of Sierra Leone’s Women, Peace and Security agenda. Sierra Leone was the 4th country in West Africa to develop a comprehensive National Action Plan (NAP) for the full implementation of UNSCR 1325, 7th in Africa, and 17th globally. There is a second generation of the Sierra Leone National Action Plan (S/L NAP II) which is geared towards the full implementation of UNSCRs 1325 and 1820. S/L NAP II has six priority themes all geared towards facilitating the effective implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Sierra Leone. The core values of the themes include prevention, protection, participation, and recovery, which are enshrined in UNSCRs 1325 and 1820, and have now been adopted by the RSLAF.

The Medium Term National Development Plan (MTNDP), 2019-2023, (the fourth in the country’s series of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers -PRSP) developed under the New Direction Agenda, to which Sierra Leone NAP II is also aligned, has also given credence to the UNSCR 1325.

By and large, the statistics of the current female strength in the RSLAF is 12%, and those on UN peacekeeping are close to 28% within the armed forces. This is an indicator that RSLAF is committed to gender parity. In 2020 /21, The RSLAF completed a recruitment exercise of a batch of officers and soldiers. Out of the total of 61 Officers, 16% were female and 84% were male. For other ranks, out of 549 personnel, 26% were female. This recruitment not only empowered and increased the female strength but also reduced the burden on the male officers and soldiers and, at the same time, demonstrated RSLAF efforts to meet the UN benchmark recruitment of 30% in the future.

To show commitment in the restructuring and reforming of the RSLAF, the Gender and Equal Opportunity Directorate has also been created to match up with the world trend for the protection of women’s rights and the reduction of gender inequality across the globe. The directorate is focused on addressing the gender gaps in the RSLAF and ensures more participation by women, gender mainstreaming, women’s empowerment, equal opportunity, and prevention of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) within RSLAF. At the creation of the Gender Directorate, it was headed by the first female Brigadier General in the RSLAF, Brigadier General (Retired) Kestoria Kabia.

The Directorate has given women in the RSLAF the chance to play a more catalyst leadership role. The recruitment process has also seen a surge of women in the RSLAF. In 2018, RSLAF’s recruitment drive was aimed entirely at women, and 100% of recruited personnel were women. This is part of the Government’s deliberate effort to comply with UN Resolutions, local laws, and policies geared towards increasing proper women’s representation in the military. To enhance the wellbeing and living conditions of women and guarantee and protect the right, dignity, and integrity of women in the RSLAF, policies like the Sexual Harassment Policy, RSLAF Gender policy, and Fraternization Policy among others have been developed. These are made by RSLAF to protect rights, prevent violence, and ensure participation to address the problem of inequality which resolution 1325 depends on by considering four (4) pillars of Participation; Protection; Prevention; and Relief and Recovery.

The Ministry of Defense (MOD/RSLAF) policy is conceived as a strategy that informs and drives the aspirations for the attainment of gender equality in the MOD/RSLAF. This policy aims at accelerating gender mainstreaming across uniformed and civilian structures of the MOD/RSLAF. The focus on gender in the MOD/RSLAF is critical for several reasons; first, it will lead to attaining operational effectiveness through harnessing the potential of the RSLAF to operate optimally and effectively. Second, it will ensure the participation of all towards the pursuit of national priorities for peaceful coexistence and development. Furthermore, it will underscore the fundamental principles of equality, non-discrimination, and fair play as elaborated in Sierra Leone’s Constitution and finally, ensure representativeness and national character of RSLAF.

However, despite the efforts to improve gender equality within the RSLAF, more can be done to increase women’s meaningful participation in peacekeeping operations.
b) Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces: Profile and national characteristics

The Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) are enshrined within Sierra Leone’s Constitution Act No. 6 of 1991. The Armed Forces is principally responsible for guarding and securing the Republic of Sierra Leone and preserving the safety and territorial integrity of the state, defending its national interest (within the framework of its international obligations), and participating in its development. Lastly, RSLAF works to safeguard the people’s achievements and to protect the constitution.

What is today known as the RSLAF has a long-standing history. It is patterned on the model set by the British Military but has gone through several metamorphoses. The abolition of slave trade, the resettlement of freed slaves in Sierra Leone and the declaration of Sierra Leone as a Colony of England made this a veritable possibility. From its earliest days, the colonial forces in Sierra Leone were used to maintain internal security and prevent attacks from local groups hostile to the colonial presence. With limited workforce, the Colonial Government conducted activities related to internal policing and pacifying the outlying regions in the 1890 wherein two distinct arms of the force were established: the Civil Police based in Freetown; and the Sierra Leone Frontier Police, which operated as a paramilitary force to patrol the hinterland. This trend continued even after World War II, when the latter was transformed into the Sierra Leone Regiment. The various paramilitary forces and militias across British West African territories were later coalesced into the wider regional West African Frontier Force (WAFF). The West African Frontier Force (WAFF) was a multi-battalion field force formed by the British Colonial Office in 1900 to garrison the West African Colonies of Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Gold Coast (now Ghana) and Gambia. In 1928, it received royal recognition thereby becoming the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAAF) with the Royal Sierra Leone Regiment having one battalion.

Before Sierra Leone gained independence in 1961, the military was known as the Royal Sierra Leone Military Force. On the 19 April 1971, when Sierra Leone became a Republic, the Royal Sierra Leone Military Force was renamed as the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF). The RSLMF remained a single service organization until 1979 when the Sierra Leone Navy was established. It further remained largely unchanged for 16 years until in 1995 when Defense Headquarters (DHQ) was established, and the Sierra Leone Air Wing (SLAW) formed. The RSLMF was renamed the Armed Forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone (AFRSL) with an independent army, navy and air wing. In order to ensure that there is a unified military force, President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah announced in January 2002 that army would be unified with the Sierra Leone Air Wing and the Sierra Leone Navy to form a reconstituted force known as the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF). These changes in institutional structure were aimed at strengthening the MOD and developing professional armed forces committed to upholding democratic principles and subjected to civilian control.

On the 23rd of March 1991, Sierra Leone plunged into a major civil war which lasted for eleven years and eventually ended in 2002. During that time, the elements of the country’s army partially disintegrated and there was high distrust of the military. Cases of indiscipline contributed to challenges with low morale, corruption, lack of transparency and poor civil-military relations. These challenges clearly meant there was an imperative for serious post-war reconstruction and reformation to transform the army into a suitably stabilizing force that could not only protect the country’s territorial integrity and dignity but also most importantly ensure it establishes a comprehensible and meaningful role outside of politics. The priority of the Government Security Sector Reform (SSR) was to restructure and reform the military aimed at creating a national armed forces, bearing loyalty solely to the state of Sierra Leone, that are able and willing to perform their constitutional role. This quintessentially required extensive re-training, advisory, and institution building programs.

Sierra Leone’s SSR program, which was undertaken in tandem with efforts to resolve the conflict, received tremendous international support, especially from the UK through the DFID, the UK Ministry of Defense, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the British-led International Military Advisory Training Team (IMATT), UNAMSIL and ECOWAS. The experiences of other African countries such as South Africa have also been extremely helpful. Its focus is on restructuring and equipping the country’s various security institutions to enable them to adequately perform their constitutional role in modern state-building. The specific objectives of SSR aimed at reducing the threats of coups, enhancing democratic principles and human rights, containing external threats, and ensuring civilian oversight function effectively. These primarily led the British Army Short Term Training Team, under the name Operation Basilica (start 15 June), to provide basic military training to the RSLAF and was eventually terminated in September 2001 when it was judged that the RSLAF had sufficient trained soldiers.
Equally, the UK set up the IMATT program which had a much broader mandate. The mandates of IMATT (SL) involves assisting with the security sector reform and transformation of the RSLAF into a self-sustaining, democratically accountable, and affordable force in order that it can meet Sierra Leone’s defense missions and tasks and to facilitate the phased disengagement and withdrawal of IMATT (SL). What this means is that IMATT conducted a wide range of training for the RSLAF. Basic training was provided to recruit whilst more specialized courses in logistics, communications, command and control were being offered to others. IMATT’s task included more than just training. There was the need to instill a professional military culture - removing links between officers and politicians - as well as instituting a system of civilian oversight of the military. The process further overlapped with the presence of both ECOWAS and UN peacekeeping missions aimed to help bring the war to an end and assist in the post-conflict reconstruction.

The military has a national representation with recruitment and enlistment into the military based on certain academic qualifications and competence and done irrespective of the tribe, region, religion, and sex the individual belongs. The restructuring of the RSLAF has led to the introduction and implementation of a fair, open, and competitive recruitment procedure with opportunities for all sections of the population, without compromising merit. The new recruitment policy provides insurance against the formation of regional and ethnic forces for regime rather than state protection. Developments such as these have improved the confidence level within the RSLAF.

The Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces is highly conventional with a centralized command structure but has decentralized bodies stationed right across the country. The command structure is one wherein authority flows from top to bottom and subordinates are answerable to commanders at all levels. The President of Sierra Leone is constitutionally the Commander-in-Chief of the military. The Minister, Deputy Minister, and Director General of the Ministry of Defense, as well as the National Coordinator of the Office of National Security are charged with the responsibility of performing oversight and supervisory role over the military. The Chief of Defense Staff (CDS) is the professional head of the RSLAF. He is responsible for the administration and the operational control of the Sierra Leone military. It is the highest military rank in the country.

The RSLAF structure is calibrated into various bodies. The highest body is the Defense Council. The Defense Council, which is the most powerful body comprises the President, the Vice President, the Minister of Defense, the respective commanders of the Army, Navy and Air Forces and their deputies, the Minister of Internal Affairs and two persons as the President shall appoint from time to time. The function of the Defense Council is to advise the President on all matters of policy relating to defense and strategy including the role of the Armed Forces, military budgeting and finance, administration, and the promotion of Officers above the rank of Lieutenant or its equivalent. The other structures include the Headquarters Joint Force Command (HQ JFC). The land, air, and sea components of the RSLAF are under the operational command of JFC who is responsible for the planning and conduct of all RSLAF operations. The Commander Joint Force (CJF) is charged with the personnel, administration, logistics and other organizational requirements to support RSLAF. The single and unified command structure, based at HQ, ensures the armed forces are able to react quickly and effectively to any incidents and threats. The RSLAF has 4 brigades operating in the northern, southern, eastern, and western part of the country. Each has operational battalions working under them. Personnel in this brigades and battalions under them are comprised of both male and female personnel. The brigades also have units and companies working under each battalion. There are also commanders and sub-commanders, comprising both female and male Personnel, who are responsible for the day to day running of their units. There are, however, no exclusive female battalions existing in the force. The Ministry of Defense (MOD) formulates and implements and monitors and evaluates strategic defense policy for the RSLAF. Parliament provides oversight, and the Office of National Security coordinates security actors.

c) Sierra Leone’s contribution to peace operations

Sierra Leone’s army has been involved in a number of UN, AU and ECOWAS peacekeeping operations. Sierra Leone’s involvement in peacekeeping operations can be traced back to the 1963 United Nations Operations in the Congo (ONUC). More recently, the military participated in the Sector Reconnaissance Company (SRC) in Darfur from 2008 to 2012, and also joined the LEOBATT Contingent alongside Kenya in Somalia from 2013 to 2015. Personnel from RSLAF have also deployed to several other UN Missions like MINUSMA in Mali, AMISOM in Somalia, ECOMOG in Liberia, UNISFA in Southern Sudan, UNIFIL in Lebanon, MINUSCA in Central African
Republic, MONUSCO in Congo, and UNMISS in South Sudan. The current strategies and priorities are to ensure the institution maintains, sustains, and increases the current strength of personnel for UN, AU and ECOWAS deployments.

Deployments of military personnel to these missions have been highly competitive. Women are being prioritized for peacekeeping operations and they have a proper representation in peacekeeping.

The Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces has no restrictions or limitations as to the type of operations in which women should participate. Both male and female military personnel are accorded equal chances, though women military personnel are given more administrative roles to perform.

3) Methodology

a) Overview of the MOWIP assessment methodology

The MOWIP methodology is a unique tool to assess and improve women’s meaningful participation in peace operations. It provides a systematic and comprehensive framework for identifying both a security institution’s existing good practices and improvements in each of ten issue areas identified as central to women’s meaningful participation. Many relevant factors are not limited, however, to the specific context of women’s participation in UN deployments. Rather, they reflect how women and men are treated in the security institution more broadly. While the MOWIP methodology has a specific focus on UN peace operations, the good practices, and possible improvements it identifies can benefit the security institution in a much wider sense.

The ten issue areas discussed below include all the factors that shape the numbers and nature of women’s participation in peace operations from initial recruitment into the RSLAF to deployment on mission. These factors can be either positive (good practices at the institutional level that contribute to women’s meaningful participation) or negative (barriers to women’s meaningful participation at the institutional level). For each issue area, the MOWIP methodology uncovers whether and to what extent it constitutes a barrier or an opportunity. Its main objectives are to:

- Provide a comprehensive set of issue areas within a given security institution that could be improved to increase women’s meaningful participation in UN peace operations.
- Identify the good practices within the security institution that can be leveraged, scaled up, and/or disseminated more broadly.
- Apply a set of tools and a comprehensive list of indicators to measure the importance of each issue area for increasing women’s meaningful participation in the security institution.
- Determine the differential impact of each issue area in the security institution.

The MOWIP methodology comprises three components. The fact-finding form (FFF) contains approximately 200 questions designed to collect qualitative and quantitative data from official sources about deployment to UN peace operations from the country and institution being assessed.

Once the first draft of the fact-finding form was completed, remaining data gaps were filled through 30 interviews with key decision makers from within the institution as well as relevant ministries.

The last component of the methodology is an hour-long survey. The Sierra Leone sample included 387 total personnel, of which 48% were women. Moreover, 41% of the sample have deployed to a mission. Of the total women in the sample, 23% have deployed.

Each issue area is ranked based on a color coding. Red indicates the issue areas that constitute the most significant barriers and green indicates areas of opportunity. Issue areas are presented for recruitment and deployment in general ( ) and specifically for women ( ). Issue areas are presented for recruitment and deployment in general (Man and woman) and specifically for women (Woman). The survey data is compared to the data from the FFF to look for inconsistencies between institutional reforms and policies and armed forces personnel’s actual experiences and perceptions. The results of the analysis were presented and vetted during the validation process with the security institution.
For each issue area, based on the results in the survey, the authors note any statistically significant differences between the responses from men and women. This means that the differences between responses given by men and women were large enough that we can state with confidence that the differences resulted from true differences in the experiences of men and women, and are not an anomaly within the survey. Further, these differences still exist after considering differences in rank and deployment experience.

The MOWIP methodology therefore produces robust and evidence-based findings drawing on perspectives from within the institution, the knowledge acquired by the assessment team as well as from national and international experts who have an academic background in gender and peace operations. It can be used to provide transformative, evidence-based recommendations that effectively target the root causes that prevent uniformed personnel, particularly women, from deploying to peace operations. Using a common methodology across many TPCCs also allows for the identification of universal barriers that need to be addressed at the UN level; and highlights good practices that can be shared and adapted to other contexts.

b) UN Women

UN Women is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide.

c) Implementing the MOWIP in the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces

Within Sierra Leone, the survey of RSLAF personnel oversampled women and deployed personnel but was not fully geographically representative of all regions. The survey was conducted in English, but the enumerator team explained key terms in Krio as necessary. Several adaptations were made to the survey to ensure it was suitable for Sierra Leone’s specific contexts, and specific answers were tailored to the country. For example, several questions about ethnic identity, region of birth, and religion, were replaced with a question on whether respondents identified as being part of a minority group. Several questions on gender and masculinity were sensitized to local contexts. Key decision maker interviews were conducted largely within a short period to help ensure availability; however, the research team would plan to conduct the interviews earlier on in the MOWIP process in the future. To ensure women were able to contextualize the findings in the survey, and because few women are in key leadership roles, UN Women and personnel in the Gender Directorate at RSLAF coordinated a focus group including around 20 women of different ranks.

The timeline for the MOWIP methodology took place between October 2021 and June 2022. UN Women completed preparation for the survey in October and began surveying RSLAF personnel in November. Interviews and the Fact-Finding Form were completed in the spring of 2022. Interviews with key decision-makers were conducted with men across a wide variety of positions and with different experiences within both strategic positions, policy decisions, and individuals, as well as with officers and battalion commanders who would be part of the nomination process for peacekeepers. The findings were presented to RSLAF in June 2022. Immediately after the validation workshop in June 2022, a researcher from Cornell conducted a focus group in Freetown with about 20 women across various ranks. The focus group with women was extremely useful in contextualizing these findings and in ensuring the results and recommendations reflected the priorities and concerns of women in RSLAF. The focus group may be incorporated into assessments in other countries as a “best practice.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-deployment stage: including factors that affect force generation</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Cross-cutting issue areas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Eligible pool</strong>&lt;br&gt;Are there enough women in national institutions?</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Deployment criteria</strong>&lt;br&gt;Do criteria match the skills needed in operation?</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Deployment selection</strong>&lt;br&gt;Does everyone have a fair chance to deploy?</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td><strong>Household constraints</strong>&lt;br&gt;Are there arrangements for families of deployed women?</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deployment stage: including difficulties for women during operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Peace operations infrastructure</strong>&lt;br&gt;Is accommodation and equipment designed to meet women’s needs?</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Peace operations experiences</strong>&lt;br&gt;Do positive and negative experiences in operations affect women’s deployment decisions?</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-deployment stage: including factors that affect redeployment</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td><strong>Career Value</strong>&lt;br&gt;Do deployments advance women’s careers?</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><strong>Top-down leadership</strong>&lt;br&gt;Do leaders at all levels support women’s deployment?</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Stages</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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4) The ten issue areas shaping women’s participation in peace operations in the Sierra Leone Armed Forces

**Issue Area 1: Eligible Pool**

*Issue Area 1: The eligible pool issue area explores whether there are enough women in the RSLAF to meet the UN Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy targets for 2028 based on the number of women in the Armed Forces and their distribution across rank and role.*

**Summary Results**

**Main Opportunities:**
- There have been recent, successful efforts to increase the number of women within the last five years.
- Access to information on enlistment is widespread and public
- There are numerous professional networks for women

**Main Barriers:**
- There are no women within senior leadership roles, and the highest-ranking women are majors (equivalent to UN OR-4, below the rank of a lieutenant colonel).
- Women do not access training opportunities at the same rate as men.
- Women’s uniforms do not accommodate their bodies or pregnancy.

**Differences in Perception and Experience:**
- Men take on more leadership roles than women, even across similar ranks.
- Barracks and toilet facilities are not separate for men and women, which leads to concerns for women.
- Due to efforts to increase women’s participation, some men feel like women are favored.

**Key Recommendations:**
- Quotas or affirmative action policies to ensure women access career courses.
- Alteration of uniforms and boots to accommodate women’s bodies.
- Inclusion of women within promotion boards, and selection/nomination committees.
- International bodies and foreign militaries funding career courses should ensure some scholarships are held for female officers.
- Require male and female (up to certain rank) personnel to attend the funerals of soldiers
- Improve reproductive healthcare for women
- Invest in training female medical practitioners who can deploy
Detailed Results

At this time, Sierra Leone deploys military observers and staff, and sends military personnel to be seconded to the UN. RSLAF aims to deploy battalions in the future but does not deploy formed battalions currently.

Figures 1.1 and 1.2: Gender in RSLAF by Rank

Since 2018, the number of women has increased steadily. However, there has not been a comparable increase in the number of female officers. Currently, women make up around 12% of RSLAF’s total strength.

i. Good practices

There has been Long-Term Interest in Recruiting Women

Women have a long history in RSLAF. The training academy in Sierra Leone, which opened in World War II, began allowing women in 1978. Around this time, there were recruitment drives for female officers in 1978 and female soldiers in 1979. Female soldiers were also part of the general recruitment in 1999.

As all the women recruited in the 1970s have all retired RSLAF has focused its attention on recruiting women. In 2019, an all-female recruitment drive in Benguema, in the western region of Sierra Leone, worked to increase both the number of female officers and enlisted personnel. This new recruitment effort was not targeted
specifically on women of higher ranks. As shown in the graph above, women’s representation in RSLAF increased from just under 6% in 2018, to just over 12% in 2022.

**Women’s Representation in the Armed Forces is Increasing, Including in Combat Roles**

Women are included in both administrative and combat roles. As of 2018 and 2019, women made up 10-11% of personnel in the country’s 11 combat units. These numbers have increased since 2009, when women only made up 4% of personnel in combat units. On average, 15% of personnel in battalions are women, and the average number of women in battalions has increased since 2009, when only 3% of personnel were women.

**Information about Enlisting in the Armed Forces is Widely and Publicly Available, and Men and Women Enlist through Comparable Processes**

Recruitment information is conducted through national radio, national television, newspapers, and information on enlistment is available on RSLAF’s official website. Most frequently, men and women access information through family and friends, through radio programs, or through their own research. Figure 1.3, below, gives a breakdown of how personnel in RSLAF have accessed information on recruitment.

![Figure 1.3 How have you accessed information on enlisting in RSLAF?](image)

There are only a few differences in how men and women accessed information. Women were more likely to receive information about the armed forces through television than men (15% v. 8%). Several women (though no men) were approached directly by a female recruiter.

Additionally, there are some differences in the motivations driving men and women to enlist in the armed forces. First, both men and women (80 v. 83%) were more likely to say they enlisted to serve their country than for any other reason. Men were more likely than women (28% v. 17%) to say they wanted to be a “hero.” Women, on the other hand, were more likely than men to join the army because of job stability (42% of women v. 31% of men) or for other financial reasons (28% of women v. 19% of men).

Around 32% of personnel in RSLAF have an immediate family member who has served in the armed forces, while 52% have a family member in either their immediate or extended family who have served in the armed forces. There is no difference between women and men’s family connections to RSLAF, nor are there differences in family connections across rank.
Adequate Equipment is Provided for Personnel

Most men and women are given access to the equipment they view as necessary to do their jobs (72% of surveyed personnel received the necessary equipment), and this is true for both men and women.

However, while most men and women said they had received the equipment that was necessary to do their jobs, about 64% of women said the equipment they had received from RSLAF was inadequate. Open-ended responses about what equipment was inadequate most frequently mentioned ammunition (13 responses), bulletproof vests (7), helmets (7), first aid supplies (3), pistols, guns, or other more sophisticated weapons (12).

There Are Women’s Associations, and Women Participate at High Rates

There is an informal women’s association in the armed forces—the RSLAF Sister’s Association—which was founded in 2011. Upon finishing basic training, all women automatically join the RSLAF Sister’s Association. Today, it has an estimated total membership of 935 female soldiers. There is also an association for both police and armed forces called the Women’s Security Sector.

Beyond the Sister’s Association, RSLAF is associated with the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces Wives’ Cooperative Society and Military Wives Association, the Ex-Servicemen Association, Women in Security Sector in Sierra Leone (WISS-SL) and the War Wounded Association. For currently enlisted personnel, there are specific organizations for branches and specialties (e.g., medical services).

Among the surveyed personnel, approximately 47% belong to professional associations that were related to RSLAF. There is a significant difference between men and women, as only 24% of men reported belonging to an organization and 70% of women reported belonging to an RSLAF associated organization. This under-represents the membership of women within organizations, as surveyed personnel may not have considered the Sister’s Association when answering the question (since all women are automatically signed up for it.)

As shown in Figure 1.4, personnel are widely aware of professional organizations, including the RSLAF Sister’s Association (77%), the Military Wives’ Association (62%), the Ex-Servicemen Association (63%), and the War Wounded Association (62%). There are also associations for specific branches and specialties. However, personnel were less aware of these organizations.

Figure 1.4. Which professional organizations associated with RSLAF have you heard of?
Women Take on Leadership Roles and Managerial Positions, Despite Gender Disparity

Women hold roughly 20% of leadership or managerial position per the FFF. This includes supervisory roles and squad leadership and occurs across ranks. Notably, this does not imply that women hold leadership positions within senior ranks. This number includes both personnel who have been promoted, and a range of informal and formal leadership roles.

Among surveyed women, 62% say they have served in at least one leadership role, while 89% of men have held at least one leadership role. This implies a significant difference in the number of leadership roles held by men and women. Surveyed men reported having held an average of 3 leadership or managerial roles, while the average number of leadership roles for women was between 1 to 2. These numbers reflect the lower number of women in officer positions (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2).

As men rise in rank, they do not report taking on a higher number of leadership roles; however, as women rise in rank, they do report taking on a higher number of leadership roles (compared to women at lower ranks). Thus, even after considering rank, men serve in more informal and formal leadership roles, while women typically only serve in a higher number of leadership roles after they rise in rank.

This is demonstrated through the number of commanding positions men and women have held. When asked “in how many commanding positions have you served,” men said they had served in an average of 3.17 command positions while women had served in an average of 1.58 command positions. This difference remains statistically significant, even when considering rank and deployment history. All else equal, women served in 1.23 fewer command positions than men.

Personnel Do Not Consider Leaving RSLAF at High Rates

Only 28% of personnel have considered leaving the institution, and there is not a difference between men and women on how likely they are to consider leaving. Rates of forced retirements are comparable between men and women, per RSLAF.

In 2019, 305 personnel left the armed forces. Of these, only 13 were women. In 2018, 256 personnel left the armed forces, of whom 21 were women.

Interest in UN Deployment is High

95% of personnel would like to deploy for the first time, and 95% of personnel who have previously deployed would like to redeploy. Among personnel who would like to (re)deploy, 98% believe they will be able to do so in the future. Furthermore, men and women both think the ideal number of deployments would be 3.5-4 times in a career. On average, men think that women should deploy 3.5 times in their lives, while men think men should deploy 3.8 times. Women, on the other hand, do not hold different opinions about how many times men and women should deploy in their careers.

Due to Quotas, Women Are More Likely to Deploy on UN Missions, Primarily as Staff Officers

As of 2019, women were deploying on peacekeeping missions at higher rates than men. This is partly due to the relatively small number of women within the armed forces and the lower number of women in officer roles, and because of UN stipulations that women be selected for certain roles. Nevertheless, it also demonstrates active interest in selecting women for deployment.

Women and men deploy on the same number of missions, as few personnel (and no surveyed personnel) have redeployed on a second mission.

While women are currently deploying at higher rates than men in RSLAF, because of historical underrepresentation of women, more men have been deployed than women. While 8% of all personnel have deployed on at least one mission, 4% of women have deployed on at least one mission. 96% of women in the
armed forces have never deployed on a mission. This disparity may be mitigated if women continue to deploy at higher rates than men.

There are Opportunities to Extend UN Missions for Peacekeepers, but Women Extend More Frequently

All personnel deployed on missions are allowed to extend their missions for three months. Men and women do not choose to extend their missions at the same rate; 70% of women have extended their missions while only 63% of men have done so.

ii. Main barriers

Some Women Do Not Feel Their Health Care Needs are Adequately Met or Their Lives are Equally Valued

In discussions, several women noted that women’s healthcare needs are not adequately met, which makes them feel as if they are not valued as highly as their male colleagues. Some stated that they felt there was discrimination against women in health coverage.

First, some women cannot access reproductive healthcare through RSLAF’s doctors, but must seek treatment outside the institution, which can lead to delays in treatment and an additional financial burden. In the worst-case scenario, they may not be able to find or afford treatment for reproductive health or other health concerns that disproportionately affect women. For example, some women described several colleagues who had breast cancer, and some who had even died of breast cancer. Despite the need for these services, there is not a specialist for women’s health or reproductive health readily accessible.

Second, some women fear that they will not be given adequate treatment if they sustain injuries in the line of duty but believed that men in similar circumstances would receive treatment. As one interviewed woman stated, they have “…never referred a woman [to receive medical care], they will allow you to die.” Two women pointed to a colleague (who was not present for the discussion) who had sustained an injury and was told she would need to receive treatment internationally. For four years, she has not received treatment. However, men have been referred for international medical treatment.

Third, some women feared being disrespected if they had certain medical conditions, and that their male colleagues would accuse them of having the wrong “lifestyle.” For example, one surveyed woman stated feeling that she had been shamed for being HIV positive. This is particularly troubling since HIV in Africa disproportionately affects women and girls disproportionately.¹

Fourth, some women feel like as if their lives are not equally valued, because colleagues do not routinely attend the funerals of their female colleagues. While all women attend the funerals of their female peers and are required to attend the funerals of their male colleagues, one woman stated “[When] male officers die, all the male officers go to pay their respects, and the women are also forced to attend. But they do not come to ours.”

Women Do Not Currently Serve in Decision Making Roles

As of mid 2022, the highest-ranking women in RSLAF are majors—a mid-ranking commissioned rank. A major is not a high enough rank to lead a battalion or make important policy or strategic decisions. The lack of women in senior leadership roles has serious ramifications for the ability to deploy all-female battalions in the future, which would be the most efficient way to increase women’s participation in peacekeeping missions.

Further, as women are not included in strategic or logistical positions, it can be difficult for women to be included in important decision-making processes, which may disproportionately impact women’s experiences in RSLAF

and on missions. For example, as there is not a senior woman officer serving in the procurement office, there was nobody to advocate for women’s needs regarding uniforms.

Further, including women within strategic and logistical positions, as well as within RSLAF specialist roles (e.g. medical, intelligence etc.), has a positive influence on women’s perceptions of their belonging in the organization. In discussions, several women elaborated on how glad they were to see women hired in various roles, and how seeing women represented in various positions and roles boosted their morale. For example, the recent addition of a female mortician made female soldiers feel as if their needs were being better respected throughout the institution, and they viewed this as a step in the right direction for women’s health services.

It is Difficult to Change Specialties

Many personnel surveyed (73%) said it would be difficult or very difficult to change specialties. The ability to have flexibility in roles matters if people can receive promotions in some areas but not others. Or if there are glass ceilings in some specialties.

Women are Not Represented on Promotion Boards

Difficulties with what some women termed a “promotion gap” stem from several sources. Based on discussions with RSLAF officers, no women serve on promotion boards at this time, though many women hold similar ranks to the men who serve on these boards. For example, men who hold the rank of captain or major sit on promotion boards, but no equivalent women personnel sit on these boards, despite the number of women who hold these ranks. Some women feel that there are unofficial “glass ceilings” within certain regiments. In discussions, one woman recounted being repeatedly passed over for opportunities that would have helped her gain a promotion, despite her hard work to prepare for those specific duties. After being passed over several times in favor of male colleagues, she brought this issue to the attention of her male superior officer, who promised she would be granted the chance to fulfill a particular role in the future, but that she needed to be patient. Ultimately, this individual transitioned into a separate unit where she felt she would not be continually passed over, and because she felt she was being punished following her initial complaint. She views this as evidence of the importance of having women in higher rank positions, as a female warrant officer would have recognized her skills and capabilities from the start.

Men and Women Do Not Access Training Opportunities at the Same Rate

There is unequal access to training opportunities between men and women, which can have serious repercussions on women’s abilities to rise in rank. To achieve promotions, personnel must access career courses and individuals must be nominated or selected for these courses. Following the mass efforts to recruit women in 1979, 1993, and 1999, there has been a steady trickle of women into RSLAF. However, the low recruitment numbers of women between 1999 and 2018 meant there were very few women available to take career courses, and thus very few women could be subsequently promoted to higher ranks. Now, as these women from older generations retire, there are fewer and fewer women in meaningful leadership positions.

First, women do not play a role in selecting who will access career courses, which are necessary for promotions. Additionally, there are not any affirmative action or quota policies in place to ensure women are granted opportunities to take career courses, as there are with positions on UN missions. In discussions and interviews, several female officers stated that when scholarships or opportunities open for career courses (for example to become a battalion commander), those positions are given to men at overwhelming rates. There may be, in given examples, only one woman in a group of 30 people taking a given course. As one female officer stated, given the low rates of women in career courses, “it could be 5-6 years until we have enough women of high rank to send all-female FPU’s.”

Second, many career courses are only offered internationally, and men are far more likely to access international training opportunities. This is demonstrated through survey evidence. Overall, personnel often engage in international training opportunities (including for career courses), though women are not sent abroad for
training at the same rate. In the survey, 57% of men had travelled internationally for trainings, as opposed to only 25% of women. These patterns, in conjunction with interview responses, strongly suggest that women are not being routinely selected at high numbers for career courses, which can stall their abilities to rise in rank. These numbers reflect surveyed personnel, which included a very high number of women and previously deployed personnel, which means that among the general population, access to these courses is likely lower within RSLAF more generally.

The discrepancy in access to training opportunities extends to in-country training opportunities. Happily, 87% of personnel report having engaged in at least one in-country training. However, there is a significant difference between surveyed men and women, as on average women have engaged in 3.5-4 in-country training, while men have engaged in 5.5-6 in-country training on average.

Beyond challenges for achieving promotion, many women felt that the lack of access to training opportunities created problems for women who want to deploy on UN missions. As most current opportunities to deploy are as staff observers, there are often specialty skills or certain higher ranks that must be achieved for women to deploy, but many interviewed women stated they have not been able to access these courses. As one woman said, “The senior division courses that are necessary for better UN employment or to propel women to positions at strategic level where decisions are made... Only men are nominated for the trainings. If you have not attended them, you cannot deploy.” Another woman recounted that strategic positions in the UN require training and criteria that women do not have, and she suggested that no woman has been trained to fill staff appointments at the UNHQ in New York, as an example.

Among several male key decision makers who were interviewed, there was a stated perception that women were not interested in many of these course trainings. However, women disputed this perception. As one woman at the validation workshop stated, “Women are eager to participate in training opportunities.” and “Of course, I want to take the trainings! Why would any woman join the military if she did not want to rise in the ranks?”

**Toilet, Dormitory and Related Facilities are Inadequate and Do Not Clearly Accommodate Women**

There are no specific women’s bathrooms in most buildings according to the FFF. Only 65% of personnel have access to their preferred bathroom. Surveyed personnel overwhelmingly preferred male or female only bathrooms, and only 20% said they preferred unisex (shared) toilet facilities. 65% of people found toilet facilities inadequate.

Barracks are provided, but they are not designed to accommodate women. Most barracks are unisex. Therefore, men and women share barracks. This is reflected in the survey. Only 62% of surveyed personnel say there are barracks for women. Around 83% of personnel viewed sleeping quarters as inadequate. The survey questions did not ask about why these facilities were inadequate. However, women preferred having separate facilities for themselves. In interviews, two women stated that they viewed barracks with both men and women as a hazard and believed separate barracks would help ensure women’s safety. This safety concern overlaps with preferences for bathrooms, as interviewed women stated that in barracks had mixed sex bathrooms.

Men and women were equally likely to view both sleeping quarters and toilet facilities as inadequate. Personnel viewed other types of facilities as inadequate as well, including office space (46%), dining facilities (31%), and recreation facilities (37%).

The view of barracks as inadequate may stem partly from the limited space available for RSLAF personnel. Given limited space, some female personnel stated that they did not feel like vacancies in living quarters were fairly allocated, and in some instance, they believed men were given preferential access.

**Women’s Uniforms Do Not Fit Well or Accommodate Pregnancy**

Though uniforms—which were last procured in 2014—are provided in medium and large sizes, these uniforms were designed specifically for men’s bodies. Overall, 80% of personnel said that uniforms sometimes or always fit their body types, while women were much less likely to say their uniforms fit. Men were more likely to have uniforms that fit (at 86%), while only 73% women had uniforms that sometimes or always fit. Further, 67% of
personnel viewed uniforms as inadequate, and women were significantly more likely than men to view uniforms as inadequate (74% v. 62%).

In discussions, multiple women named three general challenges with the uniforms. First, the number one and number two uniforms do not fit women’s body types, and they frequently must be adjusted by tailors. In the validation workshop, women mentioned common issues with the fit around the breasts and hips. For example, women pointed to the trouser flap as being difficult for women. Importantly, not all these issues can be solved through tailoring. For example, in some cases, tailoring the fit of the uniform to women’s body shapes causes issues with the buttons or insignia. Women in the validation workshop mentioned how evident it is that the uniforms are designed for men, given that the uniforms say “man” on them.

Women also noted specific issues with the number two skirt, which is provided with socks rather than tights. Socks do not look appropriate with the skirt, and women found it embarrassing.

Second, shoes do not fit women’s smaller feet. Dress shoes and boots are frequently designed for men and are not comfortable for women. In some cases, shoes are too large. Though women are asked for their shoe size, they are often provided with larger shoes (smaller sizes were not included within the 2014 procurement process). In this case, women must take the provided boots to the market and buy new ones, often at a high cost. One woman in a focus group said, “They asked my size for the boots. I am a size 38, but they gave me a size 44.” Sizes do not go below size 41, so people either give boots away and buy new ones in the markets for 400,000-600,000 SL.

Third, existing uniforms do not accommodate pregnant women. While women may be able to wear their regular uniforms early on in a pregnancy, in the third trimester, they are forced to wear the combat uniform (including combat boots). Women in a focus group discussed how uncomfortable and painful this dress and shoe choice was in advanced pregnancy. Given the difficulties with attire in advanced pregnancy, many women feel they must take leave several months before they give birth.

Lastly, uniforms do not accommodate religious or traditional clothing, per approximately 50% of survey respondents. RSLAF does not include religious clothing accommodations within the dress uniform, though exceptions are made for chaplains. This is to ensure that uniforms match and to ensure there is not a religious imposition on personnel. Women did not specifically refer to this as a challenge.

There are Few Opportunities for UN Deployment

Sierra Leone does not send a high number of peacekeepers, so very few personnel within the organization have deployed. In 2019, there were no deployed troops. However, Sierra Leone deployed 21 male observers and 14 female observers. As a result, there are currently no battalions or all-women battalions, which would provide more opportunities for women to deploy. Lower deployments rates are largely a function of fewer peacekeeping missions recently as well as UN decisions about deployment. When interviewed, an interviewed official at the Ministry of Defense stated that RSLAF and Sierra Leone is interested in increasing the number of slots available to Sierra Leonean peacekeepers, given the high rate of interest among Sierra Leonean personnel. This depends in part on UN ability to open more slots to RSLAF.

Men Feel That Women May be Favored for Deployment Opportunities

Some personnel view certain groups as receiving preferential treatment for deployment opportunities, and these views differ across gender. Most notably, while only 43% of personnel think that women are favored for deployment, there is a gap in how men and women perceive possible favoritism of women for deployment. 54% of men versus only 33% of women believe women are favored. At the same time, 65% of respondents said that favoring women for some opportunities unfairly disadvantages men. Men are far more likely to hold this view, as 76% of men believed this was an unfair disadvantage, while only 47% of women believed it was unfair. This shows that strong efforts to increase women’s participation can meet with frustration among men.

Of note, however, is that 37% of personnel think nobody is favored for jobs and promotions.
The deployment criteria issue area examines whether women can meet the requirements for deployment to the same extent as men.

**Summary of Results**

**Main Opportunities:**
- Deployed personnel overwhelmingly feel like they were well prepared for their job on peacekeeping missions.
- Most personnel feel they have met the necessary physical, medical and combat skill requirements for deployment.
- Most personnel feel comfortable approaching senior officers about deployment issues.

**Main Barriers:**
- Many personnel do not clearly understand what tests and examinations they must pass for deployment as either an observer or as part of a battalion.
- Many personnel do not have driving skills, computer skills, language proficiency or a passport.
- There are no opportunities for low-ranking men and women to deploy as part of a battalion.

**Differences in Perception and Experience:**
- Women are less likely than men to have driving skills.
- Women and men of lower ranks are less likely to have computer skills or gender sensitivity skills.

**Key Recommendations:**
- Develop skills needed for peacekeeping missions through training opportunities with quotas for women
- Increase awareness about the skills needed for deployment
- Vehicles used for training and testing driver’s should accommodate all heights, so that all personnel can improve driving skills.
Detailed Results

Criteria for deployment differ slightly for personnel who intend to deploy as observers, with battalions, or through secondment. At this time, RSLAF primarily deploys observers as part of UN peacekeeping missions. Some personnel are also on Secondment. This includes officers in ECOWAS HQ, the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea Bissau and at UNHQ in New York. The criteria for military observers are often mission-specific. In the future, RSLAF intends to deploy battalions. The criteria for secondment are the same as the criteria for deployment as an observer. Family members are not allowed to deploy with personnel on peacekeeping missions, due to hardship levels on missions to which Sierra Leone deploys. Personnel are not required to give up their jobs to deploy. The following highlight requirements for different deployments:

Requirements for Staff Observers

- A driver’s test
- A physical fitness test
- A medical test
- A written test
- A computer skills test
- A small arms/combat test.
- Observers must hold a certain rank, as set by the institution requesting observers
- Observers must have a certain number of years of experience, contingent on their specific role
- Previous combat experience or training
- A clean disciplinary record
- Permission from their immediate supervisor
- Demonstrated listening, communication, interpersonal, conflict negotiation, and mediation skills
- English proficiency
- Questions on gender sensitivity included in interview
- There are age requirements
- There is no French proficiency requirement
- Letters of recommendation are not required

Requirements for Deployment with a Battalion

The criteria are largely the same as for observers with several differences.

- A driver’s test for those serving as drivers
- A physical fitness test
- A medical test
- A small arms/combat test
- A certain rank may be necessary, as determined by the institutional request.
- A certain number of years of experience, contingent on specific role
- Previous combat experience or training
- A clean disciplinary record
- Permission from their immediate supervisor
- Questions about gender sensitivity are included in the interview
- Demonstrated listening, communication, interpersonal, conflict negotiation, and mediation skills
- There is no written test
There is no driver’s test (except for driver positions)

There is no computer skills test

There are age requirements

There is no English or French fluency requirement

Letters of recommendation are not required

The Makeup of Exams and Tests

Many of these tests are relatively standard. The physical fitness test includes tasks such as long distance running with arms and ammunition, weightlifting, push-ups, and other common fitness activities. The medical test includes checks for kidney function, HIV/AIDS, and hepatitis. As of 2020, there is also a COVID-19 test. The medical and physical test requirements are the same for men and women. To pass the combat/small arms test, male and female personnel must achieve 50%.

The make-up of the written test depends on the institution’s request. The computer skills test includes tests on the ability to impute information for reports and conduct internet research. Neither test is required for deployment as part of a battalion.

Communication skills include reported speech, the ability to speak with local populations, and the ability to communicate instructions. Conflict negotiation skills include sensitivity to issues of peace and stability as well as the ability to stay calm with local populations and conduct conversations with local populations. Gender sensitivity questions included in the interview typically include questions on women’s inclusion in peacekeeping and UNSCR 1325. A poor disciplinary record can disqualify personnel from deployment if there is evidence of abuse of women, misuse of rank by treating lower ranking personnel with disrespect, indiscipline, or failure to adhere to orders.

Based on our sample, as shown in Table 2.1 and 2.2, knowledge of different requirements varies between men and women as well as across commissioned and non-commissioned officers. These tables specify the percentage of non-commissioned men, women etc… who stated they were aware of each requirement. Awareness of the physical and medical test requirements was highest overall. However, there was high variation in knowledge of requirements on the driving, combat skills, and computer test.

Table 2.1. Knowledge of Requirements for Deployment as Staff Observers

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<td>Non-Comissioned</td>
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<td>Driver’s Test</td>
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<td>84%</td>
<td>93%</td>
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<td>81%</td>
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<td>Medical test</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>67%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written test</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer skills test</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
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<td>Women</td>
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<td>Driver’s Test (NA)</td>
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<td>28%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat/small arms test</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certain rank</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certain # years of experience</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict resolution skills</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2 Knowledge of Requirements for Deployment with Battalions
Lastly, Table 1.3 shows the degree to which men and women believe they have the necessary skills to deploy. Women were most confident in their conflict negotiation skills, and medical or physical fitness. They were least confident in their ability to have the proper rank or experience level, as well as driving skills. Men were most confident in their communication and conflict resolution skills, and least confident that they held the proper rank. As stated earlier, many staff observer positions specify a particular rank.

Table 2.3 Do People Believe They Have Necessary Skills to Deploy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commissioned</td>
<td>Non-Commissioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving skills</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical fitness</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical fitness</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer skills</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat/tactical skills</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certain rank</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years Experience</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict resolution skills</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender sensitivity</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

i. Good practices

Respondents overwhelmingly feel UN pre-deployment training prepared them for deployment.
Among male and female personnel who have deployed, 98% of survey respondents reported that UN pre-deployment training taught them the necessary and adequate skills needed for deployment to the peace operation s/he was deployed. This was a sample of 168 previously deployed individuals.

While respondents reported that they felt highly prepared for deployment, several interviewed leaders at the Armed Forces Training Center and at the Peacekeeping Training Center, who are involved within the design and implementation of pre-deployment and other training programs, were critical of Sierra Leone’s pre-deployment training program, largely due to infrastructural or logistical deficits (e.g., equipment for training), or because of limited options in-country. Due to these infrastructural deficits, and due to the decision not to deploy contingents at this time, pre-deployment training managed directly by RSLAF is limited. For observers, some pre-deployment training is conducted internationally, for example by the US African Contingency Operations Training & Assistance team or the British Army Peace Support Operations Training Team in Kenya.

Courses, Trainings and Workshops are Available to Teach Required Skills

According to the FFF, many of the skills necessary to meet these criteria are taught at the military training academy or at the peacekeeping training center. These include courses or workshops on computer skills, small arms and tactical skills, combat training, communication/listening/interpersonal skills, conflict negotiation/mediation, and language proficiency. Gender sensitivity is included within other courses, but at this time there is not a specific course or workshop on gender sensitivity, which has created some issues training and preparing gender focal points.

There are courses for pre-deployment that are not currently offered, which could be further developed, according to interviews with leaders in various training academies. They pointed specifically to improvements in tactical or weapons training (e.g., sniper training).

Respondents are Aware of Disciplinary Record Requirements for Deployment

60% of male and female respondents say that the disciplinary record is considered for peacekeeping deployment for military observers, and 52% say the same for deployment in a battalion. About 48% of all surveyed personnel say they have the necessary disciplinary record for peacekeeping deployment. When asked what challenges were posed specifically to men’s participation in peacekeeping, many key decision makers pointed to the disciplinary record as a challenge for men.

Most Respondents Believe They Have the Necessary Skills and Rank for Peacekeeping Operations

As shown in Table 1.3, many personnel feel they meet some of the requirements for peacekeeping missions. There is variation by rank, gender and across various skills.

Of note, multiple key decision makers noted that when there is a need to increase the number of women in peacekeeping missions and there is an otherwise suitable woman available for that position, she may be granted field rank to ensure she meets the basic rank requirement.

Personnel Feel Comfortable Approaching Senior Officers About Deployment Issues

Over 78% of male and female respondents indicated they would either be very willing or willing to approach a superior officer about issues related to peacekeeping deployment. Male and female respondents were similar in this sentiment, with 77% of male respondents and 78% of female respondents indicating that they would be willing to approach their senior officers.

Age is a Requirement, and Years of Experience are Required
There is a required age range. Among surveyed personnel, 14% of male and female respondents say there is an age requirement for deployment as a military observer, while 16% say there is no age requirement for deployment as part of a formed unit. 15% believe they are the appropriate age for deployment.

However, the number of years of experience is a requirement. About 20% of male and female respondents say a set number of years of service required for deployment as a military observer, while 25% say the same for deployment as part of a formed unit. 36% believe they have the necessary level of experience with the RSLAF to deploy on a peacekeeping mission.

**Personnel Believe They Have the Necessary Combat/Tactical Skills**

60% of respondents believe they have the skills or meet the requirements for combat/tactical skills to deploy on a peacekeeping mission, and were similar between men and women. However, non-commissioned women who were surveyed were more likely to say they had combat skills than non-commissioned men. In interviews with key decision makers, many senior leaders pointed out that there were some shortcomings with certain types of tactical or weapons training.

**Most Personnel Believe They Have Necessary Communication, Conflict Resolution Skills**

76% of personnel believe they have the communication/listening/interpersonal skills or requirements necessary to deploy on a peacekeeping mission. 58% of respondents say they have the conflict resolution/negotiation skills required to deploy on a peacekeeping mission.

**Most Personnel Believe There is a Standardized Process for Recruitment to UN Missions**

A majority of personnel (76%) thought that there was a standardized recruitment process for deployment.

### ii. Main barriers

**Most personnel are Unaware of Many of the Tests Required for Deployment**

The majority of personnel were not aware that driving tests, written tests, computer tests, and small arms/tactical tests are required to deploy, as shown in Tables 1.1 and 1.2. Written and computer tests are not required for deployment on battalions, though they are required for observers.

A leading challenge regards the driving requirement. 46% of male and female respondents did not select driver’s test as a requirement for peacekeeping deployment. Male respondents were more likely than female respondents to be aware that a driver’s test was a requirement for deployment as a military observer or as part of a formed unit. 59% of commissioned women who were surveyed, which includes the women who would be chosen for staff observer positions, and only 30% of commissioned women believed they had the requisite driving skills. These numbers are lower among non-commissioned women, who would be less likely to deploy as staff observers, but could potentially be employed as drivers if battalions deploy in the future.

A second challenge regards rank, as 27% of male and female respondents know there is a rank requirement for deployment as a military observer. For both men and women, many people did not think they held the right rank for deployment.

43% of male and female respondents say a written exam is required to deploy as military observers and 37% of male and female respondents (wrongfully) believed that a written exam is required to deploy as part of a battalion.

Only 21% of personnel say a computer test is required for deployment as a military observer, and 23% say the same for deployment as part of a battalion. Women are more likely than men to say there is a computer test requirement for deployment as a military observer. Women are also more likely than men to say there is a computer test requirement to deploy as part of a battalion (which it is not).
49% of male and female respondents say a small arms/tactical test are required for deployment as a military observer, while 40% say the same is required for deployment as part of a formed unit. Prospective peacekeepers must pass this exam (achieve 50% or higher) to deploy through either means.

**Many Personnel Do Not Know Communication, Conflict Resolution Skills are Required for Deployment**

Communication and conflict resolution skills are required for deployment. However, 54% of male and female respondents say communication/listening/interpersonal skills are required for deployment as a military observer, but only 47% say the same is required for deployment as part of a battalion.

Only 45% of male and female respondents say that conflict resolution/negotiation skills are required for peacekeeping deployment.

**Personnel Do Not Have Required Driving Skills**

Passing a driver’s test is required for deployment as observers but is not necessary for battalions unless you are a driver. However, only 29% of male and female respondents report having a driver’s license. Men (30%) were more likely than women (15%) to report having a driver’s license. 72% of all respondents report they do not have experience driving a car.

In the validation workshop, there was wide and excited agreement that it is critically important for all personnel to have experience driving cars before deployment, as this enables all personnel to step into driving roles as necessary. One senior officer recounted his experience in Somalia, where it was necessary to drive 45 kilometers to access water. At one time, the driver fell sick in transit, which risked the entire unit’s access to necessary water. However, the battalion sergeant had driving experience, and was able to take over that day.

Due to the critical nature of this task, driver’s training is free of cost in RSLAF. However, currently, vehicles are not widely available to conduct driver’s training.

**Though Personnel are Aware of Fitness and Medical Test Requirements, Many Do Not Believe They Fulfill This Requirement**

To deploy, all personnel must complete both a fitness and medical test. 88% of male and female respondents say a physical fitness test requirement for deployment. However, only 62% of respondents believe they meet the physical fitness requirements.

76% of male and female respondents say that a medical test is a requirement for peacekeeping deployment as a military observer, and 65% of respondents are aware that a medical test is a requirement for deployment as part of a battalion. Only 65% of respondents believe they could pass a medical test for deployment.

**Most Personnel Do Not Know Gender Sensitivity Questions Are Included in the Selection Process**

Only 28% of male and female respondents say a gender sensitivity module or similar interview question are part of the selection process for military observers, while 25% say these questions are included as part of the selection process for battalions. 29% of respondents believe they have the gender sensitivity skills to be able to deploy on a peacekeeping mission. Commissioned female respondents were more likely than their male peers to believe they have the gender sensitivity skills necessary to deploy (53% v. 33%). Non-commissioned personnel assessed their gender sensitivity skills similar across genders.

**Many Respondents Do Not Have Passports**

Only 38% of surveyed male and female respondents report having a passport. Surveyed women (40%) were slightly more likely than men (36%) to report having a passport. Having a passport is important as it may be...
essential for travel to a host country, and it may also be required for personnel to travel internationally to access training opportunities that may not otherwise be available.

**Most Personnel Lack Computer Skills**

Computer skills are required for deployment as an observer. However, only 32% of respondents reported that they have the necessary computer skills to deploy on a peacekeeping mission. There are not significant differences between men and women, as 30% of male respondents and 35% of female respondents said they have the necessary computer skills to deploy on a peacekeeping mission.

**Some Personnel Believe Language Skills are Required for Deployment**

English proficiency is required for observers. However, only 28% of male and female respondents say that an English test is required for deployment. 42% believe they have the English skills necessary for deployment.

Personnel were rightfully aware that they did not need to achieve a certain level of French proficiency to deploy. Only 5% of male and female respondents said French language skills were required, while 7% say the same for deployment as battalion. Only 4% of respondents say they have the level of French needed to deploy on a peacekeeping mission. At this time, RSLAF is not deploying to host countries where French is widely spoken (e.g., Mali).

**Personnel Do Not Know They Need Permission from Their Supervisors to Deploy**

Only 18% of respondents say that permission from their immediate superior is necessary to deploy on a peacekeeping mission either as a military observer or as a battalion.

**Very Few Personnel Believe Knowing Local Language of the Host Country or the Ability to Work with the Local Population is Important**

Few respondents think it is important to work with personnel or local populations to have a successful mission. Only 2% of male and female respondents think that having the ability to speak the local host country’s language is one of the three most important skills needed for deployment on a peacekeeping operation. 20% of male and female respondents think that having the ability to work with the population in the host country is one of the three most important skills needed for deployment on a peacekeeping operation. 15% of male and female respondents think that it is important to work with personnel from other countries for the success of the peacekeeping mission.
The deployment selection issue area explores whether women are prevented or not from deploying through a lack of information, a lack of connections to influential decision makers and/or because of biases in superiors decision-making processes.

Summary of Results

Main Opportunities:

- There are special efforts to recruit women into peacekeeping missions.
- Men and women are equally likely to be selected as staff officers.
- Senior leadership strongly recognize the importance of including women within battalions in the future.

Main Barriers:

- There is limited knowledge of deployment opportunities at this time.
- Personnel who deploy are likely to spend their own money on some costs.
- There are high rates of failure for the pre-deployment exam.

Differences in Perception and Experience:

- Men are more likely to view selection as a top challenge than women.

Key Recommendations:

- If Sierra Leone plans to deploy battalions in the future, RSLAF must ensure more widespread knowledge of opportunities and criteria for selection.
- RSLAF should pursue a better understanding of why there are high rates of failure for the pre-deployment exam.
Detailed Results

Currently, RSLAF does not deploy battalions, but they have in the past. Selection to battalions was not voluntary. Following the initial call from the UNHQ through Sierra Leone’s Permanent Mission in New York, the Defence Attaché in New York dispatch the vacancy and instructions to the Directorate of Peacekeeping Operations, MoD. He in turn sends out the dispatch to JFC for battalions to fill vacancies given to them. Per interviews with leadership involved in the selection process, the individual nominations depend on the specific needs of the mission, and on individual merit. A selection board made final selections based on the specific needs of the mission and operations criteria. This process does allow some room for subjectivity in who is selected, including at the unit level, as commanders select the people they want to nominate.

Secondment, though rare, is voluntary and occurs through a similar process. Each nomination is submitted to the selection board based on peace support operations employment criteria. Final approvals are sent to the employment agency by the Ministry of Defense.

Specifically, upon receipt of a slot from UN through the Sierra Leone Defense Attaché at the Permanent Mission to the UN, information on the slot is sent to the hierarchy of the Military through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The slot is being advertised to various brigades, battalions, units, and companies. The different commanders of these structures are charged with the responsibility of recommending qualified personnel fit for the final selection of that particular slot. Decisions about selection for UN peacekeeping operation are contingent upon the slot sent by UN. If the slot sent by UN requires only female personnel to be sent, then priority will be given exclusively to women.

i. Good practices

Men and Women Equally Likely to Be Selected Individually

53% of deployed personnel were selected individually, and men and women were equally likely to have been selected through this process. The remaining personnel either did not know how they were selected (23%) or had been selected through a battalion (20%).

Given that the current selection process is completed through nominations, and allows some room for subjectivity, this relative parity between men and women is evidence that battalion commanders (who are responsible for nominations) and the selection committee (who make final decisions) do not disadvantage women. One battalion commander who was interviewed specified that he looks at the individual soldier’s “outputs, personal files, physical fitness, attitude and their leadership qualities.”

Personnel are Equally Likely to Hear About Deployment Opportunities Across Branches

Personnel across different branches heard of opportunities at approximately the same rates. There were not significant differences between women and men’s likelihood of hearing about deployment opportunities, once branch and rank were taken into consideration. Overall, about 22% of personnel had heard of opportunities to deploy. Individuals in the Army, Airforce, and Navy (27-53% of surveyed personnel) were more likely to have heard of deployment opportunities than individuals who were serving in different specialties or administrative roles (e.g., media relations, communications). Among specialties, personnel who had served in the medical services were the least likely to have heard of deployment opportunities (only 11% of surveyed personnel).

Gender Discrimination is Not Found in Voluntary Deployments

Secondment is voluntary, but the other forms of deployment are not. Less than 5% of deployed personnel volunteered for deployment.

As deployments are primarily made individually, there is not typically a voluntary application process. Therefore, very few people (41 people in the sample, or 10% of the sample) state that they applied but were not selected. Positively, only 7 total personnel thought they were not selected after applying due to gender discrimination or because of a lack of merit. Many personnel who were not selected were not aware of why they were not chosen.
Among those personnel who did not apply for peacekeeping missions, only 12% of people said it was because of a lack of information or knowledge about opportunities.

Among personnel who reported volunteering to serve on a UN peacekeeping mission (a total of 64 people), the two most common motivations were to advance their careers (61%) and to learn new skills (41%). Less commonly, personnel were motivated to apply because they wanted to help people (28%) or to have an adventure (28%). The least common motivations were monetary (14%) and for travel (12%). Men and women were motivated to volunteer for similar reasons.

There are Special Efforts to Recruit Women into Peacekeeping

There are special efforts to recruit women into peacekeeping opportunities. In 2018, RSLAF focused on all-female recruitment. They have also developed policies to increase recruitment and have increased the national recruitment quota for women in the armed forces.

Many leaders, when interviewed, pointed out the importance that has been placed on recruiting women into RSLAF, as well as into peacekeeping operations. In part, this is driven by the international context and UN goals. There is a goal of including women as 25-30% of peacekeeping forces for the Armed Forces.

The Testing Environment is Adequate

The testing environment was adequate and free of unnecessary social pressure according to 58% of personnel in the survey. Women were more likely to say they did not have issues at the testing center (at 78%), while only 51% of men had no issues in the testing environment.

There is Not a Long Gap Between Selection and Deployment

The gap between selection and deployment was less than 6 months for 82% of deployed personnel, and on average personnel only waited 4 months between selection, approval, and deployment (about 30% waited four months). The gap reported within the survey is much shorter than the gap estimated by RSLAF itself, which was 1 year. These gaps may occur because of delays in approval from host countries, availability of the mission, availability of funds for equipment or other necessary logistics, or due to extensions of soldiers who are already posted.

Wait times were shorter for women than for men. While 97% of women had a short wait time, but 77% of men had a short wait time.

ii. Main barriers

Women Have Not Deployed Equally within Battalions in the Past

Currently, RSLAF does not deploy formed battalions. In the past, men and women did not deploy equally as part of battalions. 22% of deployed men, versus only 8% of women report having deployed as part of a battalion. If Sierra Leone chooses to deploy battalions or contingents in the future, it will be important to assess how and why women did not deploy equally within this context.

It is important to note that the change in policy has less to do with policy in Sierra Leone than a function of co-deployment. Kenya had given Sierra Leone permission to deploy with Kenya to Somalia. The RSLAF was advised not to include women in combat roles by leadership in Kenya. Around 100 women were dropped out of the contingent due to this decision. Indeed, external advisors from Kenya in 2013 recommended not including women, due to challenges with Al Shabaab. Advisors from Kenya had suggested that it was not a good idea to deploy women in combat roles, though other countries who were deployed (Burundi, Ethiopia, Uganda), had all deployed women embedded in their mission, many of whom were deployed in hostile locations.
In discussions at the validation workshop, there was wide, if not universal, agreement that the decision not to bring women—many of whom had completed the training for this mission—was a mistake, and that they would not make a similar decision in the future.

Women who were left behind describe their frustration and sadness with the decision to be left behind from the UN/AU operation in Somalia. One woman said, “We weren’t able to save for retirement.” Others described how being left behind impacted them financially, as they would have been able to buy land or a car had they been deployed with the battalion. Another woman was frustrated because she spent nearly two and half years training for the mission, and her hard work “counted for nothing.” The pre-deployment training did not apply to promotions or other types of credential building.

Information About Opportunities to Deploy is Limited

Only 22% of personnel have heard of opportunities to deploy. This low number is partly related to the small number of opportunities to deploy, and the process through which personnel are selected, which is through nomination. As RSLAF works to increase the number of deployments on peacekeeping missions, these numbers indicate ways to increase awareness of opportunities for deployment.

At this time, information on deployment opportunities is provided through mass emails, word of mouth, and immediate supervisors. The training academy also provides information modules about UN deployments. This information is provided through study days, workshops, signal messages and a muster parade.

However, very few personnel have heard of opportunities through these sources. The most common way for information to be shared is through immediate supervisors, as 8% of respondents had heard of deployment opportunities through these means. Only 5% of personnel have heard of opportunities through word of mouth. Only 5% of personnel have seen information distributed through mass emails. Men (7%) are more likely to report having seen opportunities via mass emails than women (3%).

Opportunities for deployment are not distributed over social media, radio, or TV, though 5% of personnel report having heard of deployment opportunities through these means. There was a difference between men and women on this front, as 3% of women and 7% of men reported hearing about options via these sources. Additionally, opportunities for deployment are not distributed through internal job boards or newsletters, formal professional associations, trainings, or mentorships. However, 3-5% of personnel have seen opportunities through each of these mechanisms.

Women and men both preferred to hear about deployment opportunities through their immediate supervisors, which is the most common means of sharing information.

There are High Rates of Failure on the Pre-Deployment Testing Requirements

Many previously deployed personnel have not completed an exam. While the examination space is adequate, 79% of personnel know someone who failed a pre-deployment exam, or themselves failed the exam at least once. Most people who drop out of the selection process, according to discussions at the Validation Workshop, are dropped out of the process due to medical fitness.

The exam is held at the peacekeeping training center and online but was not offered in 2019 or subsequent years. Its frequency depends on availability and on need. The exam itself includes a written essay, multiple choice questions, and an assessment development test. The specific nature of the exam depends on the nature of the vacancy. In most cases, an exam is not required for the observers.

Personnel Deploying as Observers Spend Money on Pre-Deployment Costs

If personnel are deploying with a battalion, the costs of the pre-deployment process are covered, but at this time RSLAF is not deploying battalions. If personnel are deployed as observers, they cover the costs of postage, internet costs, and a medical exam. 37% of the survey respondents report spending their own money on the pre-deployment process.
**Personnel Have Mixed Views on the Fairness of Deployment Selection**

Only 61% of personnel, including both surveyed men and women, think that the deployment process is very free and fair. Among respondents, 16% believed deployment selection was very fair, 46% thought it was fair, 15% were neutral, 18% thought it was unfair, and 6% thought it was very unfair.

At the same time only 3.5% of respondents reported exchanging a favor to try to deploy to a peace mission.

**Women are More Likely than Men to See Issue Area 3 (Selection) as a Top Barrier**

This issue is not listed as one of the top overall barriers for women’s participation in peacekeeping, but there is a difference in how men and women rate the importance of this barrier. Women were more likely to list this as a barrier for their own deployment, while men did not see this as a top barrier for women.

In a focus group, several women reiterated that the only reason women are selected for deployment is because UN deployment advertisements often specify that they are looking for a woman. If gender is not specified, they believed that a man would most likely be selected.
The household constraints issue area explores the impact of having young children, elderly parents, or other family obligations on women’s ability to deploy to peace operations, as compared to men. It also assesses whether there is community and social pressure towards women who might deploy.

**Summary of Results**

**Main Opportunities:**

- Formerly harsh policies and restrictions on pregnancy are being slowly reformed.
- Family considerations do not factor into women’s decisions to deploy, and personnel do not believe deployment hinders their ability to be good parents.
- There are a wide range of flexible options for leave, and people do not miss out on opportunities when they are on leave.

**Main Barriers:**

- Many personnel are not aware of paid options for leave.
- There are no free childcare options for young children and infants, or accommodations for new/nursing mothers.
- Many personnel believe the salary is insufficient to support a household.

**Differences in Perception and Experience:**

- Many women take on extra financial or time burdens to find childcare.
- Men and women have different understandings of their roles and responsibilities in childcare, with women taking on more day-to-day responsibility, and men providing financial support.

**Key Recommendations:**

- Purposeful and formal inclusion of women within discussions of maternal and family policies which disproportionately affect women.
- Opening childcare facilities for infants and young children, which ensure women have a place to nurse.
- Ensure that personnel understand leave policies
- Amend leave policies to reflect the needs of families
- Better understand the social stigma women face for deploying
- Invest in female medical practitioners including nurses and doctors
Detailed Results

i. Good practices

Pregnant Women are Now Allowed to Stay in the Armed Forces

Currently, there is no formal policy hindering the ability of women who are pregnant from maintaining their post in the armed forces. In the past, there have been policies limiting when women are able to become pregnant, though these are being slowly revised.

In the past, women were required to serve for five years before they were allowed to become pregnant, or they risked losing their position. Currently, that service requirement is being revised to three years, and women are less likely to be terminated if they get pregnant before the three years are up. While the policy is becoming more accommodating, some women were aware of other women who had been asked if they were pregnant when applying for certain roles or positions. Women in a focus group discussed the changing policy and said while this policy is flexible, women were left out of training opportunities and were still asked to leave. This policy also poses risks for promotions and career trajectories of women who get pregnant while in service. Moreover, women are recruited between the ages of 18 and 25, meaning that (at least in the past) women in the armed forces were unable to have children until they turn 31, which put them at risk of medical problems.

Women in the focus group also discussed how they have not formally been included in discussions about maternity policy, but would like to be included in conversations about the three-year service requirement and other factors.

As stated earlier, uniforms are not available for pregnant women, and they are asked to wear combat uniforms when they are pregnant. For these reasons, women often ask for leave before they give birth, because the combat uniforms are so uncomfortable for pregnant people. Women in a discussion group reiterated this sentiment and said that the lack of pregnancy-friendly uniforms pushes women to take compassion leave early around 7 or 8 months of pregnancy.

Personnel Do Not Feel Like They Lose Out on Career Opportunities by Taking Leave

Among personnel who have taken leave, only 25% felt like they had missed out on career opportunities. These numbers do not vary between men and women. In the validation workshop, several officers explained that this fact is the case because if people have unique career opportunities come up while they are on leave, they end their leave.

Personnel Do Not Believe Family Considerations Factor into Their Choices to Deploy

Though families are not able to deploy on missions, 99% of the personnel stated that family considerations did not factor into their decision not to apply to a UN peacekeeping mission. Moreover, 36% of the women sampled said they were unafraid of family judgement if they deployed. This is in comparison to 33% of men who were not afraid of family judgement if they deployed.

Personnel Do Not Think Deployment Hinders Their Ability to Be Good Parents

About 83% of those surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that men who deploy to peace operations could not be good fathers (only 9% agreed with that statement; 88% of women and 77% of men disagreed).

In the sample, there were 328 confirmed parents (81%), made up of 137 mothers and 190 fathers. 5 men and 8 women declined to answer the question, leaving 13 men and 51 women who reported having no children. Looking exclusively at personnel who responded to the survey question, 70% of women and 91% of men are parents.
Women Believe Their UN Allowance is Sufficient to Support a Household

58% of personnel said that the salary associated with UN peacekeeping missions is sufficient to run a household. About 57% of women and 56% of men stated that the salary from deployment was sufficient to manage their household. However, 25% of men but only 15% of women disagreed with the statement that the UN allowance is sufficient to support the household, making men more likely to disagree that the salary was sufficient.

There is Some Flexibility in Work Schedules

As shown in Table 4.1, personnel reported a few different options for how work is conducted, including work hours that accommodate personal/family needs, the ability to leave the office if there is a family emergency, and the option to work from home. This aligns with formal policy, as the FFF points out that there are flexible working hours, but this is often based in part on the situation in the country and on individual concerns (i.e., family emergency). The ability to work from home was likely specific to certain positions within RSLAF and was only available during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 4.1: What flexible working options are/have been available in RSLAF?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work from home</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work hours that accommodate personal / family needs</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to leave office for family emergency</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Families of Deceased Peacekeepers are Compensated

If a peacekeeper dies during the mission, their family may receive financial compensation, depending on the specific situation and nature of death. The financial compensation is subject to an investigation that absolves the peacekeeper/his unit. For example, if the death was due to natural causes, the family is not compensated. However, the family may receive compensation in the case of an accident. The exact amount may depend on rank, length of service.

Families of Peacekeepers Are Entitled to Healthcare

The immediate family of peacekeepers are entitled to access free medical service, and this is ensured by RSLAF.

Extended Families Provide Childcare

It is common for members of the armed forces to have extended families who provide childcare (86% of women and 73% of men). Several women discussed relying on extended family because they did not have the financial means to afford a nanny, babysitter, or daycare/schools. However, even when parents can rely on extended family, this need can pose additional financial and time burdens. One woman explained that she must travel between home, her extended family, to the office, and back every day. This is not only time-consuming and tiring, but also creates additional transportation costs.
Currently, relying on family members helps make up for the lack of childcare facilities.

**Women and Men Share Responsibilities for Childcare**

Among personnel who are parents, about 47% of female respondents and 52% of male respondents named both parents as equally responsible for childcare in the home. Though most respondents said both parents provide childcare, male respondents were also likely to report that the father takes the lead role in childcare (32%) and female respondents were also likely to say that the mother takes the lead role (36%).

While this is reassuring, the similarity in numbers is largely due to understanding the role each parent plays in the lives of their children. Men may feel that they have accomplished their duties by providing for their children financially, whereas women engage in traditional caretaking. This is reflected in the FFF, in which participants stated that it is not culturally acceptable for men to stay at home to care for children. It is understood that it is the father’s duty as head of the household to provide for the family and staying home would be viewed as irresponsible.

**All Personnel Have Options for Leave**

In RSLAF, there are several types of formal leave: annual leave, compassionate leave, maternity leave, sick leave, and disability. Per information shared in the Oral Report, all personnel are granted one month of annual leave, or 45 days if personnel are deploying out of the country. This can be used for various reasons, including family, elder, medical, or parental leave. Personnel may make additional requests as well, which are filed under compassionate leave. There are not specific policies regarding eldercare or family leave, or paternity leave. However, there are specific policies regarding paid maternity leave, or sick and disability leave, which exist separately from the one month of annual leave and compassionate leave.

Around 60% of personnel reported that they had taken leave, though men were slightly more likely to report have taken leave (64% of men and 56% of women). Of those surveyed, 15% had taken maternity leave, 10% disability, and 24% sick leave. While the survey did not specify compassionate/annual leave, many personnel have used some form of leave for other reasons including: 4% paternity leave, 25% family leave, 5% leave to care for elders. Men were more likely to report that they had taken sick leave (36% of men vs. 14% of women), and disability (16% of men vs. 2% of women). Men were also more likely to state that they had taken compassionate/annual leave to cover family care (40% of men and 15% of women), or elder care (8% of men and 2% of women).

Overall, there are wide and flexible policies available for taking leave, and most surveyed participants had taken leave. Men were, however, more likely to have taken advantage of paid leave for sick and disability.

**In-Service Training Options are Available for Personnel Who Are on Leave**

When certain in-service training courses are available, personnel who are on leave will postpone their leave, in order to take the course, which can be necessary for promotions. There are in-service training options available for personnel while they are on leave. Among personnel who have taken leave, 33% said that options for in-service training were available to them during that time. 30% of personnel had completed in-service trainings while on leave. Around 45% said in-trainings were not available while they were on leave, and another 22% were not sure. More flexibility for in-service training, especially for promotion, might be helpful for leaves that cannot be postponed (e.g. maternal leave).

**Main barriers**

**Many Personnel Stated That There are Limited Options for Leave and Paid Leave**
In RSLAF, all personnel are eligible to receive one-month annual leave (general purpose), compassionate leave (upon request and approval), and there is also maternity leave and sick leave, which are both paid. While on leave, personnel receive their regular salary, but the leave is not otherwise subsidized. Annual leave payments are distributed directly into personnel accounts, and they are mandatory.

Tables 4.2 shows the percentage of surveyed personnel who stated that certain types of leave policies were available. Table 4.3, shows the percentage of surveyed personnel who stated that these leave options were paid. However, these numbers likely underestimate knowledge about leave policies in RSLAF due to the wording of answers in several survey questions.

Table 4.2: What Types of Official Leave are Available?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Types of Official Leave are Available</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maternity Leave</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick Leave</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Leave</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate Leave (Paternity, Family, Elder)</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most personnel were not aware that maternity and sick leave are paid. However, in discussions at the validation workshop, several personnel pointed out that while they understand various forms of leave are paid, the amount that is paid is not sufficient to cover the costs of health, pregnancy, etc., which may help explain some of the discrepancy.

Table 4.3. What Types of Leave are Paid?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paid Leave</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maternity Leave</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate Leave (Paternity, Family, Elder)</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many personnel are not aware of these options for leave. When asked what types of leave were available, 44% named maternity leave, 48% sick leave, and 12% said none. Importantly, though maternity, sick and disability are all available and paid, most personnel were not aware they were formally available, and even fewer knew they were paid.
Women were much more likely to know that maternity leave is available than men are (62% of women v. 26% of men). However, men were statistically more likely to say that all other forms of leave were available. This includes the other two forms of leave that are formally available outside the general welfare leave options: sick leave (57% of men v. 38% of women) and disability (23% of men v. 9% of women).

Among respondents surveyed, there is also some confusion over whether leave is paid. In Sierra Leone, maternity leave and sick/disability leave are paid, as is the guaranteed month of leave each year. However, only 13% of personnel believed maternity leave was paid, 16% believed sick leave was paid, and 9% believed disability was paid. A sizable number (38%) believed there were no paid options for leave. Compassionate leave is not compensated.

**Women Feel They Must Receive Permission from Their Families to Deploy**

About 56% of personnel believe that a woman should ask permission from her husband/father before deploying to a UN peacekeeping mission. When asked if a woman should ask permission from her husband or father before deploying, 55% of women and 47% of men agreed and 5% of women and 6% of men strongly agreed.

**Personnel are Not Aware They Can Take Vacation While Deployed**

Per RSLAF policy, personnel are allowed to take vacations and holidays if they are deploying as staff or military observers, and R&R is available on battalions. However, only 26% of personnel reported that members of the armed forces are allowed to take vacations and holidays (20% of women and 32% of men). For those who are eligible, the vacations are not subsidized, as the peacekeeper must cover the costs of airfare and other costs.

26% of female and male respondents said that deployed personnel can take vacations/holidays, while 34% said personnel are not allowed, and 30% said it varies by mission/operation. There is a significant gender gap in the responses: 32% of male respondents say that vacations/holidays are available while only 21% of female respondents say this is the case. Female respondents were most likely to say that access to vacations/holidays varies by mission/operation, while men were most likely (39%) to say that personnel are not able to take vacations/holidays.

Of those who said that personnel can take vacations/holidays, 39% said they are not subsidized. 18% said they are able and that the subsidy is sufficient, and 14% said they are able but the subsidy is insufficient. Female respondents were most likely to report that they did not know if vacations/holidays are subsidized (56%).

**Men and Women Deploy at Different Ages and Life Stages**

Among personnel who have deployed, the average age for women is 39, while the average age for men is 46.5. Within the sample, 98% of women who had deployed had children, while 67% of women who had never previously deployed had children. Similarly, 99% of men who have deployed have children, while 86% of men who have never deployed have children. These differences are likely due to the age and career stage in which people deploy.

When asked how old children should be when their parents deploy, the average response was that children should be a little over 5 when a mother deploys, while they should be a little over 4 when the father deploys. 56% of respondents believed it was acceptable for a father to deploy if he had children who were 3 or under, while 43% of respondents believed it was acceptable for a mother to deploy with children 3 or under.

Generally, men and women held similar views around the acceptable ages of children during deployment. Though women generally believed that children could be younger when either the mother or father deployed.

**Deployment Lengths are Different Than Is Ideal for Many Personnel**

When asked the ideal length of a peacekeeping deployment, personnel gave a range of responses, which are visualized in Figure 4.1. In the past, the planned length for deployment of 9 months was below the ideal length
for many personnel. However, the lengthened time of 23 months or longer was ideal for about 15-18% of personnel.

Figure 4.1: How long would be ideal for an average deployment?

There are Childcare Options, but the Options are Limited

- There are some childcare facilities or subsidies available in Sierra Leone, but these may not be sufficient. Specifically for soldiers, there are some options for childcare at Fifth Battalion Headquarters, and 4 healthcare clinics.
- RSLAF lacks the necessary infrastructure and resources to fund and deploy contingents.
- Both men and women view infrastructure as a top challenge with peacekeeping missions.

Differences in Perceptions and Experiences:

- Women find healthcare less adequate.

Key Recommendations:

- Inclusion of specialists in women’s healthcare, including on mission.
- Improving access to birth control on missions, to ensure continuity in contraception and treatment of common medical conditions.
- Reorganization of barracks and toilet facilities to allow separate facilities for men and women.
Detailed Results

RSLAF has most recently engaged in two peacekeeping missions. First, RSLAF sent 5 rotations between 2010 and 2013 to Darfur. Rotations are meant to occur either by year or every 9 months. This was around 130 people. Second, RSLAF deployed a battalion of 850 people to the joint African Union mission in Somalia. This mission lasted for 22 months, which was longer than planned. RSLAF was not able to complete a second deployment due to the Ebola crisis that affected West Africa in 2014. Further, the scheduled length of rotations was increased to 23 months for the AU mission in Somalia, and to one year in S. Sudan/ Darfur.

i. Good practices

There are a Range of Peacekeeping Training Options Available, Though Access for Women Could Expand

Options for peacekeeping training were available online (during COVID-19), in-country, and internationally. The Peace Mission Training Center is located on the outskirts of the capital, Freetown and it hosts a peacekeeping training that takes six months to complete. The peacekeeping training includes coursework on standards and values, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, negotiation and mediation, theatre weapons, vehicles, and equipment.

Some of the courses offered include peace and security activities, the legal framework for the UN peacekeeping operations, peace building and mediation, human rights, policies on the protection of women and children, and the prevention of conflict related sexual violence, and the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. There are also courses on basic first aid, stress management, road safety, HIV/AIDS and personal security awareness. 42% of personnel have completed trainings at the National Peacekeeping Center. This includes 79% of personnel who have been deployed and 14% of personnel who have not been deployed. In 2019, 21 men and 14 women were sent to the PMTC.

There is not a difference between deployed men and women in terms of their access to peacekeeping training at the national training center. There is a significant difference between training access for men and women overall. At the national peacekeeping training center, non-deployed men were more likely to report having received training. 31% of non-deployed men had received training in this location, while only 4% of non-deployed women had done so.

Online and international options are not widely used. Only 2% of personnel surveyed report having taken online peacekeeping training, though materials on the E-learning platform are free. Only 10% of personnel say they have travelled internationally for peacekeeping training. Most personnel travelled to other African countries, mostly to Ghana and Kenya. Personnel have also travelled to China, various European countries, and Brazil, among others. There is a significant difference between the number of women and men who have completed trainings at peacekeeping training centers outside Sierra Leone---with 11% of men and only 5% of women reporting these experiences.

The difference in access to international training access for women is noteworthy, as several leaders stated in interviews that one of the strategies for incorporating women into peacekeeping operations is to ensure they receive adequate training, and that they are often sent internationally to receive pre-deployment training, given challenges within Sierra Leone with the logistics of pre-deployment training.

The National Peacekeeping Training Center Accommodates Women

The national peacekeeping training center has both male and female dormitories and bathrooms for both men and women.
Equipment, Uniforms, and Vehicles Accommodate Female Peacekeepers

On mission, the UN funds the provision of uniforms, dormitories, and basic gear equipment. Men and women peacekeepers receive the same basic gear, which includes protective gear, arms and ammunition as required, vehicle and medical equipment, a generator, a water purifier, a toolbox that includes shovels, a pickaxe, and a head pan. Equipment is not specifically designed or tailored for women.

88% of personnel report that the uniforms fit appropriately.

Sleeping Quarters are Provided and Accommodate Women

While female-only sleeping quarters or barracks are not provided on all missions, 85% of deployed personnel report that there were barracks provided. 55% of deployed personnel said that same-sex facilities were provided, 14% said there were unisex facilities provided, and 16% there were both unisex and same-sex facilities. Women use the barracks at higher rates than men and were more likely to say they were provided. Only 80% of men and 97% of women said there were barracks of some type provided. Men (9% of the total deployed sample) were more likely to choose their own sleeping quarters (e.g., rent an apartment), or to say independently report that sleeping quarters were in tents, trenches, or bunkers.

In most cases, doors to sleeping quarters could not be locked. Only 44% of deployed personnel report that they could be locked. This may pose a security threat or cause women to feel unsafe in barracks.

There Have Been Gendered Needs Assessments for Specific Missions

There has been a gendered needs assessment to understand the needs of women. According to the FFF, this is mostly conducted during pre-deployment trainings, when significant topics on gender are discussed and changes are made, as necessary. However, there is no formal gender needs assessment process at the leadership level. However, these efforts are not institutionalized.

Healthcare is Available to Peacekeepers, but Access Could be Expanded for Women

On mission, general healthcare, mental healthcare, and reproductive healthcare are all available for free from RSLAF or from the UN. Doctors, including female doctors, have sometimes deployed as part of battalions in the past. General healthcare addresses minor medical issues. Mental health care services are provided as guidance and counselling. Commanders are responsible for checking on the physical and mental well-being of staff. Reproductive healthcare includes the provision of sanitary pads and can address other issues upon individual request.

Almost all personnel report having access to general healthcare. However, only 45% of personnel report having access to mental healthcare. Only 28% of personnel reported having access to reproductive healthcare. Among those who reported that access to reproductive healthcare was not available, 37% of men did not know if it was available, while 67% of women reported that reproductive healthcare was not available. Availability of healthcare options in outlined in Figure 4.2, below.

While most personnel found access to healthcare to be adequate, there were sharp differences between men and women. Women were more likely to view provision of mental healthcare, reproductive healthcare, birth control and sanitary products as adequate. When asked if any of these services were inadequate, 55% of men and 45% of women listed mental healthcare, 51% of men and 49% of women listed reproductive healthcare, 49% of men and 51% of women said birth control, and 52% of men and 48% of women responded sanitary products. Around 25% of men said that all health services were adequate. This is shown in figure 4.3 below.

4.2. To your knowledge, are the following health services available during UN deployments.
4.3. Are the following health services adequate or inadequate?

Feminine Hygiene Products Have Recently Been Added to the Standard Deployment Kit

Feminine hygiene products are now part of the standard deployment kit; however, this is a new development. 40% of personnel in the sample knew that these products were included in the deployment kit, but women were less likely to say they were a standard part of the kit than men were. Only 27% of deployed women reported that they were standard. These numbers are likely to improve, given recent changes.

In interviews, several women noted how important the inclusion of these products is within standard kits, both on UN Missions and at home. One woman explained difficulties in finding these products while on patrols in rural and inaccessible regions. She was forced to leave the base with an escort and travel long distances to find feminine products.
ii. Main barriers

Peacekeeping Training is Not Offered as In-Service Training

Peacekeeping training is not currently offered as an in-service training in Sierra Leone, though 16% of personnel report they have received in-service peacekeeping training in the past. There is a slight gender discrepancy, but it is largely determined by peacekeeping experience.

The in-service trainings that are offered in Sierra Leone include courses designed for military police, platoon commanders, platoon sergeants, section commanders, and intermediate staff.

Many Personnel do Not have Access to their Preferred Bathrooms on Mission

Only 53% of deployed personnel had access to their preferred bathroom while on mission. These numbers are similar for both men and women, though men were overall more likely to have access to their preferred bathroom. Most personnel prefer gender specific bathrooms (e.g., male only).

Not all Equipment and Facilities on Mission are Adequate

Personnel do not find all equipment on missions to be adequate, as shown in Figure 4.4, below. Primarily, personnel reported issues with bathrooms, and sleeping quarters. Women found sleeping quarters more inadequate, and men found equipment and uniforms to be more inadequate.

UN uniforms do not accommodate religious or traditional clothing, per the FFF. Only 32% of personnel said uniforms accommodated religious or traditional clothing.

Birth Control is not Widely Accessible on Missions

Per the FFF, birth control options, in the form of contraceptive pills and injections, are available upon request and are readily accessible in health units. Male condoms are also provided free of charge. However, many women do not access birth control or are not aware of it. 25% of personnel report that there is free birth control available
on mission. 38% say that birth control is provided but that it is not free. The most commonly chosen response by women (73%), was that they did not have any access to birth control while deployed, either free or for purchase. Notably, different forms of birth control may be used for purposes beyond contraception. This may include treatment and management of painful and common medical conditions such as endometriosis or fibroid tumors, both of which could hinder a woman’s ability to participate fully within various duties, including patrols, combat, or training activities.

Relatedly, only 23% of personnel had been treated by a female physician on mission. Women were more likely to have been treated by a female physician – 42% of women versus 17% of men.

**RSLAF does Not Have the Infrastructure to Send Formed Contingents**

The RSLAF do not currently have the capability and resources to send formed contingents. For staff officers, much of the infrastructure is provided by the UN, rather than RSLAF, and RSLAF has limited control. The infrastructure at headquarters is superior to equipment elsewhere.

**There are No Sierra Leonean Consulates in Host Countries**

Sierra Leone does not have a consulate in the countries where their personnel deploy. This makes it more difficult for personnel who might need to extend missions or renew passports. This was not a concern for key decision makers or within the validation workshop.

**Infrastructural Deficits are Viewed as a Top Challenge for Both Men and Women Peacekeepers**

Peacekeeping infrastructure was named as one of the top three challenges for both men and women personnel deployed on peacekeeping missions. 30% of personnel (both deployed and non-deployed) viewed some type of infrastructure as the top barrier for women on UN missions, while 53% of personnel viewed infrastructure as one of the top three challenges for men.

**There are Concerns about Height when it Comes to Driving**

According to the FFF, both women and men are physically able to drive the 4x4 vehicles, so they do not need to be fitted specifically to women. However, some interviewed leaders pointed out that there may be a height issue and that some women are not able to drive the vehicles because they are not “women friendly.” As such, the requirements about the height restriction are not clear and may prevent some women from becoming drivers.
The peace operations experiences issue area assesses the impact of (positive and negative) experiences during deployment, including experiences of meaningful participation, on women’s decision to redeploy or not, and to encourage or discourage others from deploying.

**Summary of Results**

**Main Opportunities:**
- Many, if not most, respondents had positive experiences while deployed on peace operations, and 91% of respondents believed they helped to contribute to the peace and security of the host country.
- Personnel feel strongly that they were adequately prepared for their most recent deployment and that their role in the peace operation matched their skills.
- Few survey respondents reported being subject to unwanted behavior during their deployment.
- When transitioning back to life at home, respondents received assistance from the UN and other sources.

**Main Barriers:**
- Most personnel faced at least some challenges on mission, including issues with payments, food supplies, and homesickness.
- Many personnel have heard stories or complaints about negative experiences on mission, though these discussions do not appear to dampen enthusiasm.
- Most peacekeepers experienced some form of harsh criticism while they were deployed.

**Differences in Perception and Experience:**
- Men are more likely than women to access networking/mentorship programs or activities while deployed.
- Women were more likely to report experiencing many challenges while on mission
- Women were more likely to expect challenges with infidelity or cheating and men were more likely to expect issues with personal relationship or their spouses upon returning home
- Men were more likely to be involved in driving accidents
- Women are much more likely to be socially engaged during their deployments
Key Recommendations:

- Encourage and provide information on how personnel can engage in mentorship opportunities while on mission

- Better understand why there are challenges regarding payment for UN deployments and address challenges regarding the payments for UN deployments

- Provide more training on and support for cultural adjustments

- Develop a better system for distributing food rations

- Ensure that men and women are treated equally when it comes to being able to leave the compound or base

- Better understand and prepare for the challenges that personnel face upon return from the mission, including relationship challenges
Detailed Results

iii. Good practices

Almost All Respondents Believe They Will Receive Benefits from Deployment

Almost unanimously, 99.9% of personnel say they either received or would receive benefits from deploying on a UN mission. These benefits are discussed at greater length in Issue Area 7 (Career Value).

Personnel Derive Professional Satisfaction from Their Contributions and Experiences on Mission

Of the respondents who had been deployed, 91% agreed or strongly agreed that they helped to contribute to the peace and security of the country to which they deployed (98% of women and 89% of men). At the same time, 92% of respondents reported that their role in their most recent deployment matched their skills (88% of women and 94% of men).

Only 9% of female and male respondents reported discomfort in their job as a UN peacekeeper, though male respondents (10%) were slightly more likely than female respondents (7%) to report feeling discomfort in their peacekeeping roles. The high degree of professional satisfaction may be partly attributed to the high level of preparation for the mission, as 98% of respondents said that they were either very prepared or prepared for their most recent peace operation deployment.

Few Respondents Reported Challenges with Lodging, Safety, or with Other Peacekeepers

Among respondents who had previously deployed, very few personnel had issues around safety, lodging and hygiene, or safety. Additionally, few peacekeepers had challenges with religious observation.

Despite some serious challenges with peacekeeping infrastructure (see Issue Area 5), only 25% of previously deployed personnel reported experiencing issues with lodging and/or hygiene while deployed on mission.

In addition, only 2% of respondents report experiencing problem/s with peacekeepers from other countries. About 20% of male and female respondents report feeling unsafe during their deployment/s due to violence in the host country, very few (1%) reports being the victim of a crime during deployment, and few (4%) report experiencing problem/s with a relationship back home or in the host country (1%). Around 11% of respondents report experiencing problems observing their own religion, traditions, and/or culture while deployed. Lastly, 19% of respondents report experiencing a driving accident while on mission, including 21% of male and 13% of female respondents. See Box 6.1 for a breakdown of these potential challenges, as well as others, broken down by gender.

Most Respondents Had Access to Vehicles When They Wanted Access

Per policy, vehicles are available to both men and women while on mission. On deployment, 78% of both female and male respondents report having access to a vehicle whenever they wanted.

Most Deployed Personnel Did Not Experience Unwanted Behavior, Including Unsolicited Messages and Images, Name Calling, or Harsh Criticism.

Few respondents reported either experiencing or witnessing behavior that might violate theirs/or others personal integrity. This kind of behavior to women and men in RSLAF from other contingents can be demoralizing. Examples of this sort of discrimination might be jokes about how people from certain countries cannot do their job as well as people from other countries. Examples of harassment might be receiving unwanted messages or the posting or sharing of inappropriate photos among peacekeeping personnel from different countries. Luckily, only 7% of both female and male respondents reported witnessing or experiencing unwanted texts or messages from colleagues while deployed on a UN peace operation. Only 4% of respondents reported witnessing of
experiencing a colleague criticizing another colleague for not fulfilling their familial obligations, and only 3% experienced or witnessed a colleague refer to someone by something other than their name or title. Around 7% of female and male respondents reported witnessing or experiencing unwanted pictures of themselves or a colleague posted on the internet, including 9% of male and 4% of female respondents.

Further, very few respondents experienced or witnessed a colleague make jokes about others during the deployment. On the survey, only 3% reported colleagues making jokes about women, 7% reported jokes about a colleague’s physical appearance, and only 3% reported hearing jokes about sexual orientation.

The Majority of Personnel Did Not Experience Discrimination or Favoritism on Deployments

Among personnel 85% of deployed respondents did not report experiencing or observing any kind of discrimination while deployed on UN peace operations. Further, 85% of respondents reported that everyone is treated with respect on mission, including 83% of male respondents and 89% of female respondents. Only 2% of both female and male respondents report that women are treated with less respect that others.

Respondents Receive Support Transitioning Back After Deployment

As outlined in Figure 6.1, most personnel have received support transitioning back home from some source. Most personnel (82%) received assistance from the UN transitioning back to their lives in Sierra Leone. This post-deployment program is led by the UN, but RSLAF plays a significant role in organizing it.

A smaller number of personnel received assistance from other sources, including informal support from their family and friends. There are gendered differences in how men and women reported other formal forms of assistance, as men were more likely to report receiving assistance from colleagues, mentors, supervisors and from RSLAF.

Figure 6.1. Who helped you transition/reintegrate back home after your most recent UN deployment?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of UN Support</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The UN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal RSLAF Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

iv. Main barriers

Many Personnel Have Heard Complaints About Experiences on UN Missions

Most personnel (60%) have heard complaints about the experiences of their colleagues while on mission. Around 85% had heard women complain about their experiences, and 77% had heard men complain about their experiences. There are not gendered differences in who was likely to hear men/women complaining.
Despite the high number of people who have heard negative stories, only 12% of personnel who had heard women’s complaints said that it influenced their willingness to deploy. Interestingly, among those who had heard complaints, 17% of men and only 8% of women said that these stories influenced their willingness to redeploy. Similarly, 15% of people who heard men’s complaints said it influenced their decision making. Again, men were more likely to say these stories impacted them than women were (18% of men and 11% of women).

**Most Respondents Do Not Engage in Mentorship or Networking Opportunities on Mission**

While deployed, the battalion commander serves as a mentor for both women and men in the unit. There are also networking opportunities available, which include travel opportunities, learning to drive or taking courses. However, only 43% of female and male respondents report participating in some type of networking or mentoring programs during any of the UN peace operation deployments, as outlined in Figure 6.2. Male respondents (49%) were far more likely than female respondents (29%) to report having participated in some type of mentorship or networking activities.

The three most common forums for networking and mentorship were groups for male personnel (20%), formal programs facilitated by RSLAF (14%), informal networking activities (13%). Among deployed women, 20% accessed women’s groups, 4% accessed formal programs, and 9% accessed informal networking activities. Among deployed men, 27% accessed men’s groups, 18% accessed formal programs, 15% accessed informal activities.

**Figure 6.2. What type of Networking/Mentorship Programs did you Participate in While Deployed?**

**Most Personnel Reported At least Some Challenges While on Mission**

Only 9% of male and female respondents report experiencing no problems during any of their deployments. These common challenges included issues with payments (32%), food (58%), cultural adjustment (29%), health (25%), and homesickness (46%). Notably, women were more likely to report that these were challenges than men, as shown in Table 6.1.

Regarding food, typically, personnel are given a sustenance allowance and are responsible for finding their own food. They are also provided with rations. Most recently, in Somalia, they ran out of 3 months of rations, and this may have contributed to the high number of people who said food was a challenge.
Table 6.1. What problems have you encountered during a UN peace operation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Driving Accidents</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with Peacekeepers from Other Countries</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insecurity Due to Violence in the Host Country</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim of a Crime</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discomfort with the Job of UN Peacekeeper</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting to Local Culture</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payments</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing or Hygiene</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homesickness</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Observation</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with Someone Back Home</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with Someone Else on the Operation</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Personnel Were Not Able to Leave Base/Compound without Escort**

While both men and women are formally allowed to travel away from their base/home while deployed, only 14% of respondents reported being able to leave the base/compound, while 22% said it depended on the operation. Another 72% said that they were not allowed to leave. Just under 93% reported needing an escort to be able to leave the base or compound either on all missions or on some missions. Women and men did not report different experiences in their ability to leave the compound. Regulations about leaving the base may vary by mission, based on country-specific and mission-specific requirements.

**Less Than Half of Personnel Engage in Social Activities while Deployed, Though Women are More Social**

Per the FFF, a minority of both men and women engage in social activities while on mission, which may include soccer games, group dinners, or storytelling. About 48% of surveyed personnel engaged in some type of social activity either everyday (30%), once a week (12%), or every few weeks (4%). Nearly 30% of personnel said they had never engaged in social activities while deployed, and this number the same for men and women.

Women engage socially at a higher rate than men, as 58% of women and only 44% of men reported engaging frequently in social activities.
Many Respondents Were Criticized by Colleagues While on Mission

Among deployed personnel, 65% reported that they had been criticized by a colleague while deployed on any of their UN peace operation deployments. Overall, men were more likely to report being criticized than women (70% of men and 53% of women). Members of the validation workshop noted that criticism is not common practice within Sierra Leonian culture.

The sources of criticism are noted in Figure 6.3. The most frequent criticism was for the way someone speaks (18%), or for someone’s level of knowledge about a certain topic or issue (17%). Some personnel also reported being criticized for being overly emotional (7%), being too aggressive (9%), or for the way they dress (5%).

Women were much more likely to report being criticized for being overly emotional, because of the way they speak, for their level of knowledge about a certain topic or issue. Men were more likely to be criticized for being overly aggressive.

Figure 6.3. Have you Ever Been Criticized by a Colleague on the Following Bases While Deployed?

Over a Third of Respondents Believe They Would Experience Issues Upon Returning Home from Deployment

37% of respondents reported experiencing issues or believed one would experience issues upon returning home from a peace operation. The breakdown of these issues is noted below in Table 6.2.
Table 6.2. What problems do you/did you encounter ON RETURN from a UN peace operation? If you have never been deployed, what problems could arise upon return?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Men (%)</th>
<th>Women (%)</th>
<th>Other (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problems with my Personal Relationships</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with my Spouse</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with my family members</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with my children</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with my friends</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infidelity</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce/Separation</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumors being spread about them</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Men were more likely to report facing challenges with personal relationships (18% of men v. 11% of women), and with their spouse (24% of men and 10% of women). However, women were much more likely to report issues with infidelity or cheating (19% of women v. 9% of men).
The career value issue area measures whether peace operations help the careers of military personnel. This, in turn, affects whether men and women are likely to deploy and redeploy. Women who have deployed may choose not to redeploy if it is not advantageous to their career prospects.

**Summary of Results**

**Main Opportunities:**

- Personnel had incredibly positive assessments of the value of peacekeeping for their careers and skill sets
- Personnel use their extra salaries to benefit their households and families
- Deployment does not delay promotions
- Peacekeepers feel widely recognized for their service

**Main Barriers:**

- Peacekeeping experience and UN assessments are not formally integrated into promotion decisions.

**Differences in Perception and Experience:**

- Women are particularly likely to view peacekeeping as valuable for their careers and to report learning new skills
- Women are more likely to believe that peacekeeping extended their social networks
- Women are more likely to feel like they have been recognized for their peacekeeping experience

**Key Recommendations:**

- Consider promoting the efforts of peacekeepers at the national level with monuments or celebrations
Detailed Results

i. Good practices

Personnel View Peacekeeping Experiences as Valuable for Their Careers, Especially Deployed Women

Across both deployed and non-deployed personnel, 98% of surveyed respondents thought that deployment on a peacekeeping mission would help advance their careers, as shown in Figure 7.1. Among deployed personnel, these percentages remain the same.

Figure 7.1. To what degree would deployment on a peacekeeping mission advance your career?

Most personnel believed peacekeeping deployments would benefit them in several ways, as outlined in Figure 7.2. Overall, 71% of personnel believed peacekeeping would improve their resume, 70% thought peacekeepers were likely to learn new skills and 75% believed they would increase their professional competence.

Strictly among previously deployed personnel, women were more likely than men to believe that peacekeeping experience had improved their resumes (64% of men and 82% of women), taught them new skills (68% of men and 87% of women), and increased their competence (75% of men and 88% of women).

Personnel expected to gain social benefits as well, including gaining new friends and improving their social networks (57%), and improved cultural awareness (53%). By sex, 47% of men and 55% of women listed social networks as a benefit and 51% of men and 57% of women reported increased cultural awareness as a benefit. While deployed men and women were equally likely to say they had improved their cultural awareness (51% of men and 57% of women), women were significantly more likely to report having made new friends and extended their social networks (48% of men and 82% of women).

Figure 7.2. What benefits did you get/would you get by participating in a UN mission?
Personnel Receive Extra Salary and Use These Funds to Support Their Families

75% of personnel said peacekeepers receive extra salary. Among deployed personnel, 65% of personnel said they had earned extra salary, and there was no difference between previously deployed men and women.

Among deployed personnel, the most common ways in which personnel spent the extra salary was on purchasing land (64%), or a house (59%), and on their children (31%). There are differences between how men and women utilized extra salary, as women were significantly more likely to purchase a car (38%), put the money towards purchasing a house (70%), or to give the money to extended family (25%). Most men reported using the money for a single purpose, while women distributed funds across multiple uses.

Peacekeeping Experience Does Not Delay Promotions

Only 5% of deployed personnel said that their promotions were delayed or that their careers were disrupted by participation in a UN mission. For peacekeepers, rank is guaranteed upon return, though their positions are expected to change.

However, 92% of deployed personnel reported returning to their old jobs when they came back from deployment. The most common outcome is for deployed personnel to return to the location where they previously worked, where they take on a new role. This is per official policy. Once personnel deploy, it is expected that their positions will be filled as soon as possible.

Peacekeepers Are Not Brought Home When There Are Domestic (inside Sierra Leone) Political Challenges

Sierra Leone does not bring peacekeepers home during times of national emergency in the host country (e.g., Somalia or Sudan). Sierra Leone also keeps peacekeepers in the host country when there is an election in Sierra Leone. However, RSLAF does bring peacekeepers home when there has been a peacekeeper death on the mission.

Peacekeepers are Recognized for Their Service on UN Missions

The majority of personnel felt like they had been recognized for their service in some way, as outlined in Figure 7.3. Only 8% of returned personnel felt like they had not received any recognition for their deployment service.
Medals are presented to personnel on peacekeeping operations by the host country, and the ceremony is completed in the host country. However, they are not awarded with medals in Sierra Leone.

Most frequently, people felt recognized by RSLAF, their friends and family, and by their communities.

**Figure 7.3. After returning from deployment, who or what granted you recognition for your service?**

![Chart showing recognition for peacekeeping service]

48% of peacekeepers felt recognized by the community upon their return. This would include within their hometowns and neighbors. The experiences of men and women are significantly different. 43% of men versus 62% of women felt recognized by the community. A smaller number of previously deployed personnel felt that they had been recognized by a community organization. Though women again felt like they had received more recognition from those organizations than men had. 58% percent of both men and women felt like they were recognized by their friends and family upon returning home. Upon returning, it is common for some communities to throw parties for their loved ones, as they have gone on mission, returned safe, and achieved a milestone within their careers.

Though the government does not formally recognize returned peacekeepers, 41% of deployed personnel feel their contributions have been recognized by the government. This number is much higher among women, as 55% of deployed women and 36% of deployed men felt recognized by the government.

**Peacekeeping on UN Missions is Integrated into the National Security Strategy**

Peacekeeping is integrated into the national security plan. RSLAF deploys in UN missions to provide security in conflict zones, to assist in providing safe passage for UN workers and other humanitarian workers, to assist in facilitating peace and tranquility. Lastly, RSLAF has been very clear in stating its dedication to maximum participation of both male and female personnel.

i. **Main barriers**

**Peacekeeping is Not Formally Considered Within Promotion Decisions**

Peacekeeping is not formally considered in decisions on promotions, or dismissals. There is not a system for integrating UN assessments into national promotion systems, as RSLAF has set its own standards for rising in rank. Only 18% of personnel believed peacekeeping would improve their chances at a promotion.
Peacekeepers are Not Memorialized in Sierra Leone

There are not any memorials or statues to peacekeepers in Sierra Leone, as is the case in Ghana or Canada. Nor is there a national peacekeeping day. Stories related to peacekeeping do not feature in internal RSLAF communications or within the legendary histories of the institution. Women’s contributions in peacekeeping are not formally highlighted by the government.
The top-down leadership issue area explores the impact of political will among those in influential positions (or lack thereof) on women’s deployment and meaningful participation in peace operations.

**Summary of Results**

**Main Opportunities:**
- Most personnel have at least one mentor within RSLAF, and most personnel are willing to reach out to their superior officers.
- Senior leadership and officers are routinely trained on topics related to gender and understand the importance of preventing SEA.

**Main Barriers:**
- Many personnel do not know about formal institutions and policies on gender (e.g., gender mainstreaming policies or gender toolkits).
- Not very many personnel have had a woman as an immediate supervisor.
- While gender focal points have been selected, they have not yet been fully trained and utilized.

**Differences in Perception and Experience:**
- Women were more likely than men to have taken gender courses as part of their pre-deployment training

**Key Recommendations:**
- Implementation of specific workshops and trainings on gender sensitivity to ensure implementation of gender focal point program.
- Institutionalize physical space and resources for the gender directorate.
- Further investigate why personnel feel that senior leadership does not listen to their concerns and ways to improve communications channels.
Detailed Results

i. Good practices

Senior Leaders Consider Peacekeeping as Strategically Important for Sierra Leone

Key decision makers universally agreed that RSLAF engagement within peacekeeping missions was of high strategic value to the armed forces and to Sierra Leone. Many pointed broadly to the importance of contributing to regional peace and security; but to direct benefits to RSLAF itself. Illustrating these views, a deputy minister within the Defense Ministry pointed out that “contribution to UN peace operations helps to improve the competency of the security force. It also helps [soldiers and officers] to understand other military systems, thereby implementing some of the strategies that they learnt in peace operations.” Other interviewees mentioned the generation of “substantial” revenue for both the government and the military; while others mentioned benefits for individual personnel (e.g. greater cultural awareness). Additionally, several leaders argued that peacekeeping contributed to democracy, and that it was a rare opportunity to showcase Sierra Leone’s values and example around the world. There is also broad understanding among key decision makers who were interviewed that engagement within these peacekeeping missions requires the inclusion of women.

Increasing Women’s Inclusion in Peacekeeping is Included Within the National Action Plan

Sierra Leone published a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 in February 2019, which was passed by Parliament and is promoted by the Women’s Caucus in Parliament. Increasing the number of female peacekeepers is included in this plan.

RSLAF was specifically commended for their efforts to recruit women: “Not only are women marginalized in elective, but also in appointive positions, even though the government is tending to redress this situation. The recent drive by the Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) to recruit about 300 women only through national, regional, district and chieftain level drives is a measure to redress the paucity of female officers in this security institution and scale up its equal opportunity/institutional gender policy. This is commendable.”

Following the UN’s 2004 request for all contingents to increase the number of female peacekeepers, RSLAF began working towards this goal. RSLAF still intends to increase the numbers of women within peacekeeping missions, though they have lacked necessary resources at times. There is legislation on this, including an updated version of the Women Empowerment and Gender Act of 2000 that is presently advocated for to be adopted by Parliament.

In interviews, many key decision makers reiterated the emphasis that has been placed on including women within peacekeeping, and they have discussed various stages of this plan. The steps they discussed typically included a) succession recruitments efforts to increase the numbers of women, b) women’s inclusion within training programs, and c) encouragement of women within leadership roles within their regular duties.

There is a Gender Mainstreaming Policy

There is an official gender mainstreaming policy, and senior leadership have stated its importance publicly through tours conducted among brigades and units, and through the media. The gender mainstream policy involves incorporating this agenda into the policies and actions of organizations, projects, and networks of all political life. Per the FFF, “gender mainstreaming means the (re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of political and professional decision-making processes and actions to take gender perspective into account.”

Moreover, there are various policies related to gender. They are a) Sexual Harassment Policy, b) Peace Operation, d) Recruitment and Retention Policy, e) Fraternization Policy, f) The Domestic Violence Act, g) Maternity Leave

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3 Gender Training Manual for RSLAF.
There are Gender Advisors and a Gender Directorate

Within other ministries beyond the Ministry of Defense, there are gender advisors. In addition, there are ministries dedicated to gender issues, including the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs. There is also a caucus on gender issues in the Parliament and gender advisors in the Campaign for Good Governance. One issue with national policies on gender is the slow process of implementation, as multiple agencies are included. The most recent policy on gender was adopted in 2010 but needs to be updated.

Further, there is a six-person gender directorate within the armed forces. In discussions, many personnel suggested this would be more efficient if it were a fully staffed unit. Further, discussions in the validation workshop corroborated that many of the necessary policies on gender and gender mainstreaming have been stalled by lack of resources and enforcement.

The individuals within this Directorate serve as advisors, who receive complaints, offer advice to victims and perpetrators on domestic and workplace harassment, report issues through the central gender hub at RSLAF, assess and evaluate the effectiveness of training for female personnel, and identify any gaps in efforts towards gender inclusion.

Gender Focal Points Have Been Identified, But Require More Training

RSLAF is currently planning to train and assign 60 gender focal points across the institution. These individuals have already been identified, but the necessary gender training is currently not available in Sierra Leone.

There are gender focal points within the ministry of defense as of 2010, and their role differs from gender advisors. Gender focal points coordinate all gender activities.

In years past, there were gender focal points within units, but this policy was abandoned because they were not utilized.

The course material required for a gender focal point to be deployed would include Human Right Courses; Sexual/Gender Base Violence (SGBV); Negotiation, Mediation, Investigation, Monitoring and Reporting SGBV, Fraternization and Sexual Abuse cases Procedures; Women’s Reproductive Health Course; Gender Advisor Courses; UN/AU Rules on gender; Gender Toolkit Training; Gender Assessment Training.

There is a Gender Toolkit/Report

There is a gender toolkit/report within RSLAF. This is a record book maintained at the unit level as well as Ministry of Defense and RSLAF. It records any complaints of gender issues or malpractices, records the date and time the incident occurred, the name of victims and if the perpetrator is known his name is recorded. The nature of the misconduct or malpractice is logged.

Personnel Are Aware of Trailblazing Women as Potential Role Models

In RSLAF, there are several women who are considered trailblazers, including Major Cecilia Munu, Captain Yainkain Y.B. Kamara, and Major Alice Sesay. Major Munu gained her commission after serving sometime in the armed forces and is currently pursuing coursework in gender studies outside of Sierra Leone. When asked if they knew of women in RSLAF who were the first to deploy on a UN mission, 48% of surveyed personnel (both men and women) knew of these groundbreaking women.

There is a Formal Woman’s Association
There are several women’s associations within RSLAF, and 91% of personnel are aware of them.

RSLAF Sister’s Association plays a key role in supporting women’s inclusion but is not sufficient on its own for furthering the promotion and success of women.

Women in a focus group said that they contribute 70 cents each month towards the Sister’s Association and this money is used to support women’s education within RSLAF so women can do things such as take their high school exams, learn skills and more. The recruitments to be recruited into the military to be an officer (ages 18-25) are the same for university so many people have not completed their education. People want to attend college, but they must serve five years before they are allowed to go to university. This effort to support women’s education in the Sister’s Association is in large part due to the legacies of the war and the support from the First Lady.

The Sister’s Association can also be used to provide gifts to new mothers or when people are bereaved. However, this fund is not enough to fully support women’s education in RSLAF, nor can women financially contribute more to the Association.

Most Personnel Have At Least One Mentor

Most personnel (71%) have at least one mentor within RSLAF. These are outlined in Figure 8.1. Though not statistically significant, women were more likely to say they had a mentor in RSLAF than men. Among women, 18% had a male mentor, 51% had a female mentor, 52% had a higher-ranking mentor, and 18% had a mentor who had previously deployed. Among men, 46% had a male mentor, 3% had a female mentor, 38% had a higher-ranking mentor, and 18% had a mentor who had previously deployed. This implies that there is a gendered aspect to who mentors whom, as women are more likely to serve as mentors for other women. Further, very few men have been mentored by women.

Figure 8.1: Types of Mentors available for Peacekeeping Service

Senior Leaders, Personnel and New Recruits are Trained on Gender Issues

All new recruits are required to take in-service training courses, some of which discuss gender issues. Further, the majority of mid-career officials have taken at least one course that included discussions of gender issues, per the FFF, and senior leaders are required to take courses that cover topics on gender. In the survey, 83% of personnel said taking these courses was required at the basic academy.

In the survey sample, 60% of enlisted (low ranking) personnel have taken an in-service course that covered gender, as have 69% of non-commissioned officers, and 67% of commissioned officers. There are not any
statistically significant differences between the likelihood that men and women at different ranks have taken at least one in-service course that discussed gender.

This suggests that all members of RSLAF have been exposed to some degree of training on gender issues. The courses that are often taken by senior leaders and mid-career soldiers include course components on gender awareness, SEA and sexual harassment and domestic violence, gender mainstreaming, etc. The current in-service training takes place at the Joint Communication Unit. There are also courses aimed at women specifically to help promote women’s empowerment, including courses on driving and computer studies, and an emphasis on secondary learning opportunities.

For new recruits, the basic training courses on gender includes the following points, per the Gender Training Manual.

- **Sexual exploitation and abuse:** Raising awareness on any abuse of position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes; this includes profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation.
- **Sexual harassment:** sensitization on any unwelcome, usually repeated, and unreciprocated sexual advance, or demand for sexual attention.
- **Domestic violence:** Raising awareness on violence that is perpetrated in the domestic sphere, which includes physical violence such as battering or beating, as well as psychological and emotional abuse including verbal abuse, or insulting the modesty and integrity of a woman’s body.

Importantly, these courses, currently, are not specifically on gender or on gender sensitization. When discussing training on gender, several women discussed the importance of providing gender sensitization courses for senior leadership to foster a “radical approach to accepting women.”

### Senior Personnel Promote Gender Trainings

When asked if any senior or superior officers had reached out to them about training on gender issues, 66% reported they had been contacted. Results are similar for men and women.

### Senior Leadership Have Taken Some Steps to Punish and Speak Out Against SEA

Within RSLAF, there is a framework for addressing SEA. Per the RSLAF Policy on Sexual Harassment of March 2013, “the leadership of the Ministry of Defense (MOD)/RSLAF shall ensure that appropriate human and financial resources are allocated to facilitate the implementation of the provisions outlined in the policy. Trainings shall be conducted with members of the RSLAF/MOD service personnel and leadership are aware of the provisions of the sexual harassment policy.” Based on this framework, a gender focal point within the Ministry of Defense replicated these trainings into brigades and battalions.

There are examples of personnel who were punished for violating SEA. Punishments may include reprimands, severe reprimands, reduction of rank, imprisonment, or dismissal. The severity of the offense determines the punishment. Senior leaders have spoken out publicly against SEA, including through radio discussions and a road show debriefing in relation to the Gender Act. These discussions were also included within familiarization tours with battalions across Sierra Leone.

Within discussions, personnel highlighted the challenges with funding on issues related to SEA. While there had been plans put in place, some of this work has not been completed because funds were either withdrawn or lost.

### Personnel are Willing to Approach Leadership About Various Challenges

Among the personnel surveyed, 83% were willing or very willing to reach out to superior officers regarding job-related challenges. This is shown in Figure 8.2, below.
Figure 8.2. Would you be willing to approach leadership about job challenges/inappropriate behavior?

If they were aware of inappropriate behavior from one of their colleagues, 81% of personnel would be willing or very willing to reach out to their superior officers. Only 9% would be unwilling to reach out about inappropriate conduct. Around 86% of personnel would be willing or very willing to reach out to superior officers regarding family issues (e.g., childcare or marital issues), and 10% would be unwilling to reach out about these issues. Women and men were willing to reach out to their superior officers to a similar degree. By sex, 82% of men and 79% of women would be willing to discuss inappropriate conduct with a supervisor, while 5% of men and 12% of women would be unwilling. In regards to discussing family issues with a supervisor, 76% of men and 74% of women would be willing, while 21% of men and 10% of women would be unwilling.

Figure 8.2. Would you be willing to approach senior leadership about family issues?

There are Male Allies Who Advance and Support Women and Women’s Rights

All surveyed personnel were asked if they knew of any men who had stood up for women and women’s rights in a number of ways. Only 16% of personnel did not know any men who had stood up for women in some way.

- 60% of personnel knew men who had mentored a female colleague. Women (66%) were more likely to know these men than other men (53%) were.
- 56% of personnel knew men who had stood up for women who were being discriminated against.
- 51% of personnel knew men who had helped promote women in rank.
- 60% of personnel knew men who had promoted policies that help women.
- 54% of personnel knew men who had talked with their male colleagues to help correct problematic behavior towards women.
ii. Main barriers

Many Personnel Are Not Aware of Tools and Institutions for Addressing Gender in RSLAF

Within RSLAF, there are gender toolkits, reports, the possibility of gender focal points in the future, a gender directorate and there are gender mainstreaming policies. However, the majority of personnel are not aware of these institutions. This is likely due to the differences between formal policy, state goals, and the implementation of those policies.

First, only 18% of personnel were aware of the gender toolkit. Second, when asked if there was a gender mainstreaming policy, only 39% of both male and female personnel were aware of gender mainstreaming policies. Nearly half of the personnel were aware of gender focal points and the gender division. In the survey, 49% of personnel were aware of gender focal points. Interestingly, men (58%) were statistically more likely than women (40%) to be aware of gender focal points. Lastly, nearly half of the personnel (49%) were aware of the gender division. While personnel of higher rank were statistically more likely to be aware of this division, men and women were equally likely to be aware or unaware of it.

Figure 8.3. What resources are you aware of in RSLAF for addressing gender issues?

In discussions at the validation workshop and the oral report, most participants agreed that many of these policies exist to some degree but have not been fully implemented. This may create some confusion among survey respondents about what type of institutions exist. For example, there were gender coaches in RSLAF 11 years ago, but there are no longer gender coaches. Additionally, there have been efforts at gender mainstreaming, deploying gender focal points, and working through policies on gender, but these are not necessarily fully implemented. Key decision makers pointed to a lack of funds on these issues. In some cases, funders pushed for policies or institutions, but the funds were either insufficient, or the relationships ended before the policies were completely implemented.

Most Personnel Do Not Have a Clear Understanding of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325.

Per the FFF, most senior leaders have knowledge of UNSCR 1325, and information on the resolution is included in training on gender inequality. However, among those who were surveyed, only 45% of commissioned officers said they had heard of UNSCR1325. Another 55% either said they had not heard of it or did not know if they had. There were not differences between commissioned men and women’s knowledge of UNSCR 1325.
Among non-commissioned officers, 31% said they were aware of the resolution, and only 14% of enlisted men and women were aware of it. Non-commissioned female officers were more familiar with it than their male peers (27% of men v. 47% of women). Enlisted men were more likely to be familiar with it than enlisted women (20% of men v. 9% of women).

When asked to describe the contents of UNSCR 1325, most personnel were not able to describe it in any detail. Among those who said they had heard of it, 71% of commissioned officers, 46% of commissioned officers, and 20% of enlisted personnel were able to say that it was connected to women and either security or peacekeeping.

**Few Personnel Have Had Female Direct Supervisors**

As there are very few women within high-ranking positions in RSLAF, very few personnel currently serve under female supervisors. In the past, there were more female officers—due to the efforts to recruit women in 1977 and 1979—however, most of these women have now retired.

Only 26% of respondents had ever served under a woman who was their direct or immediate supervisor. These numbers are the same for men and women.

Women in a focus group mentioned the lack of women in senior leadership positions today. Women would like to see more women in senior leadership in a variety of positions such as quartermasters, adjutants, commanders, and at operational and strategic levels of the armed forces. One woman said, “I want to see a woman as commander or Joint Force Commander” in specialist wings, but women are not always given these opportunities for career development. RSLAF women in the focus group also discussed how there used to be more women in senior leadership roles; these women were recruited in the 1979 batch of female recruits. However, they felt that when these women exited the armed forces, male leadership did not take early and sufficient steps to replace or “groom new female officers.”

Women in senior leadership positions are important to women in the armed forces, both as supervisors, as role models and as advocates for women’s needs. While women take part in combat roles within infantry units, they do not serve in leadership roles, per women in a focus group. They say women serve as corporals, but this does not necessarily mean that they are leaders. One woman said, “… just because you are a corporal doesn’t mean you have the appointment [for specific roles].”

**Personnel Do Not Feel Like Senior Leadership Listens to Their Concerns**

When asked if senior leadership sometimes refuses to listen to the experiences of lower ranking personnel, most personnel said that they either agreed (44%) or strongly agreed (22%) that senior leaders did not always listen to lower ranks. 10% did not have a strong opinion, while 18% disagreed and 6% strongly agreed that senior leadership do not always listen. Interestingly, how people answered this question was not strongly associated with their own rank or their deployment status, though men were slightly more likely to agree with the statement.

Some women specified, for example, that they do not feel like their needs as single mothers are recognized by senior leadership. For example, when one single mother who was attempting to take high school/university courses after her shift, requested some alterations to her schedule, her senior commander denied her requests, because he did not see the value of her taking these courses and assumed she would be able to find childcare easily. This meant she had to pay for childcare after her shifts, which created additional financial burdens.

Another challenge for women’s ability to feel heard stems from the low number of female officers in strategic and logistical positions. Female officers would have the ability to recognize, understand and advocate for women’s needs in ways that neither male officers nor women in civilian roles would be able to. For example, some interviewed women pointed to the lack of female military officers in the procurement process. There were several civilian women, but these women were not in a position to challenge the decisions of military officers, and they were not fully aware of the needs of female soldiers. Per these women, this was, in part, why there were not uniforms ordered for women.
**Gender Training is Not Part of Pre-Deployment Training, Though Many Personnel Believe It Is**

Per the FFF, gender training is not offered as part of pre-deployment training. Around 30% said they had taken some type of gender course as part of pre-deployment training. Women were more likely than men to report taking a gender course as part of pre-deployment training (21% of men v. 49% of women).

**Few Deployed Personnel Took Gender Courses While Deployed**

Strictly among those who have previously deployed, only 12% took an additional course on gender while they were deployed. These numbers are the same for men and women.
The gender roles cross-cutting issue area explores whether the prevalence of gender stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes influences the number of women deploying and their ability to meaningfully participate in peace operations. We assess this by looking at the degree to which women and men hold traditional roles and views about the roles that men and women play in society. We also assess the degree to which a gender protection norm exists in the institution. This means we assess whether men and women continue to feel that women must be protected from danger.

**Summary of Results**

**Main Opportunities:**

- Personnel interact with local communities frequently while deployed, and men and women do so in comparable ways.
- Men and women both participate in operations and combat roles, and most personnel believe women are capable of combat.
- Men and women will both serve as gender focal points, once the trainings are complete.
- Men and women both think women should take responsibility for administrative and non-dangerous operations such as training local police.

**Main Barriers:**

- Many personnel believe women should take responsibility for engaging with women and children.
- Personnel believe men should take responsibility for dangerous tasks such as handling bomb threats.
- Some women fear that men will not listen to or respect their orders if they hold leadership roles.

**Differences in Perception and Experience:**

- Women view themselves as more capable of combat than men do.
- Women are disproportionately more likely to take on extra care tasks such as cooking and cleaning.
- Men serve in command roles more frequently than women, even after considering rank.

**Key Recommendations:**

- Purposeful promotion of women into senior leadership roles, specialist roles, and throughout logistical or strategic roles, where women are currently underrepresented, or their value is not fully recognized.
- Ensure the fair and equitable distribution of work outside of formal duties.
• Try to promote women’s leadership capabilities as a part of a campaign
Detailed Results

i. Good practices

Personnel Interact Frequently with Locals While on Mission and In Similar Ways

As shown in Figure 9.1., 30% of male and female respondents say that they interacted with the local population every day, while 37% of respondents say that they interacted with locals once a week during their last deployment. On average, female respondents appear to interact with locals as much as male respondents, though there are noticeable differences. The findings imply that women likely interact with locals at higher frequencies on a weekly basis. However, there are more men who interact with locals every day.

Figure 9.1. How Often did you Interact with Local Populations on Your Last Deployment?

Among deployed women, 24% interacted with locals daily, 57% had similar interactions at least once a week, 2% every few weeks, 9% once a month, and 2% every few months, and only 4% never interacted with locals while on mission. Among deployed men, 31% of male respondents interact with locals daily, 29% interacted with locals weekly, 12% every few weeks, 14% once a month, 7% every few months, and 8% either never interacted with locals or only did so once.

Personnel interacted with locals in a variety of ways, as shown in Figure 9.2. The most common ways that peacekeepers interact with locals are through patrols (33% men, 17% women), training and monitoring of local security forces (17% men, 8% women), community-based work such as CIMIC activities (15% men, 7% women), and through the provision of services such as medical clinics (16% men, 5% women). A smaller number of personnel engage in other deployment activities including monitoring activities for situation reports (20%), and civilian protection activities such as displaced person camps (15%).

Figure 9.2. In what ways did you interact with locals while on mission?
Few peacekeepers engaged with locals outside their formal duties. Only 10% report going to local activities such as religious services, 8% volunteered during their free time, and only 2% spent time socializing with locals.

When asked how they interacted with locals, there were no statistically significant differences between men and women peacekeepers. However, there are some unexpected and interesting differences. Women were generally more likely to engage with locals while on joint patrols (77% of women over 64% of men). Men were slightly more likely to say they had provided services to locals (31% of men over 23% of women), and to monitor situations for reports (23% of men over 14% of women). All other differences were within a few percentage points.

**Women and Men Serve Equally in Combat and Operational Roles While on Mission**

61% of the female and male respondents engaged in operational activities daily during their last deployment. 14% of the respondents served in combat and operational roles at least once a week. Female respondents were as likely to perform these activities as their male colleagues. 60% of female and 64% of male respondents say they engaged in daily operational activities. However, evidence included in other sections of this report suggest that while men and women may take on operational roles, there may be some sorting of men into riskier or more dangerous tasks. Women in a focus group reiterated the sentiment that people are given the same roles and opportunities.

**In the Future, Women and Men Will Deploy to the Same Missions**

Among all the female respondents who had deployed, 4% had deployed twice and the rest had deployed once. A similar percentage distribution can be observed among male respondents who had deployed. 84% of male respondents were deployed to a UN peace operation. 17% participated in two missions.

Senior leadership who were interviewed throughout this research process almost unanimously agreed that women should be included within all types of missions (e.g., safer missions like in Cyprus and in more dangerous mission as in Mali). They typically claimed that “women have an important role to play.”

Previously, women were left behind from deployment to Somalia. However, there was wide agreement in the validation workshop that this was a mistake.

**Most Personnel Believe Women are Capable of Combat Operations**

![Graph showing how personnel interact with locals](image)
Overall, 88% of male and female respondents agree or strongly that women have the capabilities to perform technical operations. It is important to note, however, that fewer male respondents agreed with this statement. Overall, 96% of female respondents agreed that women are capable of tactical operations. Only 82% of male respondents gave a similar answer.

While there is acceptance that women may serve in combat roles, several key decision makers stated that combat is still largely seen as a specialty of men. For example, one colonel stated that “men are at the forefront in situations in actual combat.” Another stated that while women may be engaged in combat, “men will protect them if necessary.”

**Men Will Serve as Gender Focal Points**

21% of both female and male respondents served as gender focal points. This task is not necessarily incumbent on women. In fact, 21% of male respondents and 20% of female respondents served as gender focal points. While on peacekeeping missions, and per the FFF, men have served as gender focal points, while the minority of women have. This suggests that issues and concerns around gender are not viewed solely as a concern for women.

**Personnel Believe Men and Women Should Engage Equally in Many Tasks on Missions**

Surveyed personnel thought that men and women should be equally responsible for typing situation reports, engaging with refugees, and training local police forces. 81% of the respondents say that either female or male peacekeepers should be responsible for typing mission reports (8% selected men only, 11% selected women only). 56% of both female and male respondents believe that either male or female peacekeepers should engage with refugees in camps (16% said men only, 27% said women only). 55% of male and female respondents say that male and female peacekeepers should train the local police (38% selected men, and 6% selected women).4 There are not striking differences in how men and women responded to these questions.

**Figure 9.3. What type of peacekeeper would be best suited for engaging in certain tasks?**

Looking solely at surveyed peacekeepers, there are not notable differences in how they responded to who should take responsibility for training local police or typing of reports.5 However, there are gendered differences in how male and female peacekeepers responded when asked who should engage with displaced

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4 We note that the military would not train the police. However, this question was meant to capture people’s beliefs about gender roles in general.

5 Ibid
persons. Women peacekeepers (44%) said that a female peacekeeper should take sole responsibility, while only 26% of men thought a woman should take sole responsibility. Male peacekeepers were significantly more likely to say that either men or women should take responsibility for engaging with refugees (54% of men and 33% of women). 20-22% believed male peacekeepers should take sole responsibility.

Of note, there is a sense within many of the key decision maker interviews that women are often tasked with used administrative, nursing or cooking tasks, while men are more active within combat roles.

i. Main barriers

There are Gendered Expectations on Who Should Engage with Humanitarian Issues

Personnel believe that women should be primarily responsible for engaging with women and children in conflict zones. 38% of survey respondents said that female peacekeepers should engage with women and children in conflict zones. 12% of the respondents believe this task should be incumbent upon male peacekeepers. 50% said either a male or female peacekeeper should respond. There are some gender differences. Women were more likely to say that a male peacekeeper should take sole responsibility (18% of women v. 8% of men), while men were more likely to say that either a male or female peacekeeper should take responsibility (55% of men v. 48% of women). Men and women were equally likely to say that women should be solely responsible.

Figure 9.4. Who should engage with Women and children in Conflict Zones?

Looking only at personnel who have previously deployed, ideas about who should engage in certain tasks on mission are striking. When asked who should engage with women and children in conflict zones, male peacekeepers were overwhelming less likely than female peacekeepers to believe that a man should be responsible for engaging with women and children in conflict zones (10% of men versus 40% of female peacekeepers). They were equally likely to believe that women should be solely responsible (35-39%). Male peacekeepers were significantly less likely to say that male or female peacekeepers should be solely responsible than women peacekeepers were (51% of deployed men versus 24% of deployed women).

These findings are further demonstrated within key decision maker interviews, where there was a great emphasis placed on the particular ability of women to handle humanitarian challenges. For example, one battalion commander stated that “when we need humanitarian support, we use women because they know how to talk to people.” Another brigade commander stated that “women have proven to be good mediators in peacekeeping negotiations.” A group captain stated that women have an important role to play, such as in “consoling their fellow women and children in the host country and even combat roles.” The common use of
statements such as this suggests that senior leaders do value the inclusion of women within peacekeeping missions, but often view women as especially able to handle certain types of inter-personal and military challenges, and that women may therefore face “different expectations,” as one colonel stated. In the Oral Report, several people explained that some of these differences are due to functional competencies, and that women in the armed forces and in Sierra Leone were more likely to have certain types of skills at a high rate.

Some Women Worry They Will Not be Viewed as Leaders or Good Soldiers
Related to the low number of women within higher ranks, some women feared that women who were put into leadership positions would not be respected by their male colleagues. As one woman stated, “men don’t want to take orders from women because it is insulting.”

Additionally, some women feel like they have been told they do not belong within the armed services. One woman stated, “When I joined, a brigadier general told me, ‘You have a business woman’s name, not a military name’.”

There are Gendered Expectations on Who Should Handle Terrorist/Bomb Threats on Mission
When asked who should respond to a potential terrorist attack, personnel believed men should be primarily responsible for handling the possible bomb. While 43% of personnel believed either male or female personnel should respond to the threat, 53% thought male peacekeepers should respond. Only 5% said a female peacekeeper should take responsibility. Interestingly, in this danger laden situation, there were no differences in how surveyed men and women believed people should respond.

However, among previously deployed personnel, there were significant differences between how men and women responded to these questions. 54% of male peacekeepers and 73% of female peacekeepers thought that men should be solely responsible for responding to terrorist threats. 39% of male and 24% of female peacekeepers thought men and women should take on equal responsibility for responding to terrorist/bomb threats.

Taken alongside the earlier point about gendered expectations on humanitarian issues, these findings on responsibilities vis a vis care and bomb threats, suggest that women may be more likely to push against gendered expectations that a woman should be responsible for caring for other women and children, and this willingness to push back against gendered expectations is particularly prominent among previously deployed female peacekeepers. However, while female peacekeepers are more willing to question gendered stereotypes about who should interact with women and children, they are simultaneously more likely to uphold gendered stereotypes about who should respond to dangerous terrorist threats. Male peacekeepers, however, respond similarly to non-deployed male personnel.

There is Some Evidence that Personnel Alter Roles in Order to Protect Women
Building from the previous point on widespread views about whether women should be tasked with dangerous tasks, and what types of combat they should be involved in. In key decision maker interviews, there was some discussion that men may be favored for more dangerous forms of combat, which supports the findings in the survey on this point. For example, one colonel stated that “men are usually at the forefront [of combat] and undertake risky missions.”

Further, within discussions of these results, many senior leaders explained that certain missions and tasks are deemed too dangerous for women, so they are not sent on those operations. In Somalia, for example, there were some areas where women peacekeepers had been directly threatened by local populations, or because women faced a much higher degree of hostility. Women were not sent back to those areas for their own and others safety.

Women in a focus group said that sometimes they are prevented from going on patrol because the “terrain is too rugged,” but not because the patrol mission is too dangerous. This suggests stereotypical gender norms play a role in the ability of women to participate in missions under circumstances.
Working with Other Countries on Mission May Limit the Ability to Deploy Women
In discussions on this report, several senior leaders emphasized past challenges that Sierra Leone has faced when deploying women to certain hostile or dangerous areas. When working with other countries, which have different Memorandums of Understanding, it has occurred that those countries were not willing to send women to certain areas or were not willing to work with Sierra Leone’s female peacekeepers. For example, on the AU mission, RSLAF could not deploy women to work with Kenya’s troops, as Kenya was not deploying women at that time and had different rules and practices around female peacekeepers.

Women Engage in Extra Gendered Work Outside of Formal Duties
Outside of their formal duties, women are more likely to take on extra, gendered work: both cooking and cleaning. 82% of female respondents say they engaged in cooking activities during their deployment. Notably, most formally employed cooks are male. The percentage of male respondents is significantly lower as 53% report having performed cooking activities.

The same disparity can be observed for cleaning activities. While 57% of male respondents say they engaged in cleaning activities, 71% of female respondents performed similar tasks.

Men were more prone to engage in activities associated with masculinity. For instance, male respondents reported having driven during their deployment, whereas only 17% of female respondents engaged in driving activities.
The social exclusion issue area explores whether in-group / out-group mentalities cause women to be marginalized, ostracized, denigrated, harassed, or attacked thus preventing them from deploying or participating meaningfully in peace operations. It also explores the ways in which male group cohesion forms. We assess this by looking at the levels of harassment and violence in the institutions and sanctions against them, as well as healthy and unhealthy ways of creating cohesion.

**Summary of Results**

**Main Opportunities:**
- Women and men interact frequently within professional settings and complete trainings together.
- Very few surveyed personnel report experiencing harassment, though this number may be underestimated.
- Personnel are willing to report misconduct that may occur on peacekeeping missions

**Main Barriers:**
- There is not an official whistle-blower policy.
- People do not understand the internal complaint system, and it is not independent.
- Not all personnel understand domestic violence is a violation of RSLAF codes of conduct.
- Shared barracks and toilets may contribute to sexual harassment and sexual based violence.

**Differences in Perception and Experience:**
- Men are more likely to engage in co-ed sports and other similar bonding activities.
- Women are more likely than men to understand harassment policies and complaint systems.

**Key Recommendations:**
- Internal complaint system must be institutionalized and separate from commanding officers, to ensure they cannot overrule complaints from below.
- Expansion of gender directorate and deployment of gender focal points following gender sensitivity training.
- Separation of barracks for men and women to ensure safety.
Detailed Results

i. Good practices

Most Personnel Believe RSLAF is Like a Family and Socialize Together

88% of male and female respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement “We in the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces are more of a family than ordinary people.” Moreover, 90% of male and female survey respondents reported socializing with colleagues outside of work.

Joint Trainings are Widely Accepted and Men and Women Work Together Frequently

Technically, all trainings within RSLAF are joint for men and women, though women do access fewer trainings. These joint trainings include capacity building sessions, formal and informal trainings, gender equality trainings, and medical practice trainings. The vast majority of personnel (90%) reported that mixed gender training is the appropriate way to conduct trainings in RSLAF. This was true for both men and women, as 84% of men and 96% of women expressed this as their preference.

Due to the wide acceptance of joint training, and evidence of women’s integration into different branches and units, the vast majority of personnel interact with both men and women on a daily basis. 90% of male and female respondents report working with colleagues of the opposite sex either every day or a few times a week. 94% of female respondents and 84% of male respondents report working with colleagues of the opposite sex on a daily basis.

The Majority of Personnel Have Not Experienced Harassment

Only 3% of respondents reported receiving or hearing of colleagues receiving unwanted text messages; 1% report receiving or hearing about criticism for not fulfilling family duties; 1% report being called or having heard of someone being called a name; 3% report hearing of or experiencing unwanted pictures published on the internet by colleagues; 1% report hearing jokes being made about women; 2% report hearing jokes being made about physical appearance; 1% report hearing jokes being made about sexual orientation.

Some key decision makers did state in interviews that they understood that women were more likely to experience harassment than men, including while on peacekeeping missions. It is possible some types of harassment were not captured within the survey responses.

There are Co-ed Sports Teams and Other Activities, Though Men Participate More Often in Sports.

There are several sports teams within the armed forces, including football, handball and boxing. There are also co-ed sports teams, as well as women’s and men’s teams that compete separately.

80% of personnel reported being aware of co-ed sports teams in the RSLAF, but 90% of men reported participating compared to 71% of women respondents.

Non-athletic co-ed activities are also offered at the training centers, within the joint medical unit, etc…. These include prayer groups, dances, social clubs, and similar activities. Per the FFF, men and women frequently participate in these activities.

There is a National Ombudsman

There is not an ombudsman within the armed forces, but there is a legislative oversight committee for the armed forces and there is a military tribunal system. This was established in 2002, and the Court Martial Law was established in 2003. These were amended from the RSLAF law of 1961.
Personnel are Highly Likely to Report Misconduct and View Misconduct as Serious

When asked about a variety of hypothetical scenarios that can occur on peacekeeping missions, the majority of personnel (at least 82%) said they would report their colleagues who had engaged in misconduct and viewed these behaviors as very serious or serious. These forms of misconduct are widely understood to be a violation of policy while on UN missions. Respondents answered as follows:

90% would report a colleague who drove drunk and hit someone with their car (83% of men and 91% of women). 93% believe driving drunk and hitting someone is serious or very serious (90% men and 96% women).

84% would report a colleague who hit someone with a baton and permanently injured them (79% of men and 84% of women). 86% believe hitting someone with a baton and permanently injuring them is serious or very serious (85% of men and 85% of women).

91% would report a colleague for receiving cash in exchange for not reporting a crime (88% of men and 91% of women). 93% believe receiving cash for not reporting a crime is serious or very serious (91% of men and 94% of women).

82% would report a female colleague for engaging in a sexual relationship with a local boy (77% of men and 81% of women). 87% believe a female from their team engaging in a sexual relationship with a local boy is serious or very serious (85% of men and 89% of women).

85% would report a male colleague for engaging in a sexual relationship with a local girl (80% of men and 86% of women). 92% believe a male from their team engaging in a sexual relationship with a local girl is serious or very serious (89% of men and 94% of women).

**Figure 10.1. How likely would you be to report the following types of misconduct?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likelihood of Reporting Misconduct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleague who drove drunk and hit someone with their car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague who hit someone with a baton and permanently injured them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague for receiving cash in exchange for not reporting a crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Colleague for engaging in a sexual relationship with a local boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male colleague for engaging in a sexual relationship with a local girl</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent of Respondents

### ii. Main barriers

**Some Personnel are Not Aware of the Official Sexual Harassment Policy**

While there is evidence of sexual harassment within RSLAF, there is not wide knowledge of sexual harassment policies. One decision maker said, “people complain every day about sexual harassment, assault and even rape.”
According to the FFF, there is a policy guarding against sexual harassment and fraternization in the armed forces. This policy defines sexual harassment to include unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other forms of verbal or physical misconduct of a sexual nature. Further, the policy includes unreasonable interference with individual work performance, or creating an abusive, hostile, or intimidating work environment as harassment. Per the policy, it is not acceptable to condition promotions, awards, training opportunities, and other job benefits upon acceptance of unwanted sexual advances. Further, domestic violence is considered a form of misconduct by RSLAF.

Among survey respondents, 79% of male and female survey respondents were aware of the official harassment policy, though 21% were not aware. Women (89%) were more likely than men (69%) to be aware of an official harassment policy.

There is Not an Official Whistleblower Policy

Per the FFF, there is not a whistleblower policy. Any sensitive complaints are meant to be channeled through the chain of command, to ensure punishments are institutionalized (such as dismissal or loss of rank).

However, 45% of male and female survey respondents claimed they are aware of an official whistleblower policy.

There is An Internal Complaint System, Though It is Not Independent or Widely Known Among Personnel

There is an internal complaint system formally written within armed forces, and is free and fair, per the FFF. However, complaints can also be handled informally. When this occurs, the involved officers are called for an investigation, and both parties make a statement. The statement is investigated, and any officer who is guilty of a crime is charged and punished accordingly. These processes are not independent, as they can be overturned by commanding officers, in accordance with their discretion.

75% of male and female survey respondents were aware of an internal complaint system. 15% were not aware of an internal complaint system. Women (82%) were more likely than men (68%) to be aware of an internal complaint system.

During the Oral Report, there was widespread discussion of what personnel may know or understand about the complaint system. While most agreed that personnel were likely aware of what types of behavior or actions were misconduct, there was likely widespread confusion about how to lodge complaints. One contributor to the Oral Report remarked that many people file complaints in the wrong places, which may lead to difficulties in those complaints being handled appropriately.

Among a focus group of women personnel, several mentioned numerous issues when reporting procedures. They pointed to the lack of physical infrastructure for the gender directorate, and the low number of personnel within the directorate. This can make it difficult to report problems, and it can leave the individuals within the gender directorate overwhelmed. In one instance, one woman stated that because the gender directorate did not have a physical space where she could go, she did not think they would be able to process her complaint.

Some Personnel Are Not Aware Domestic Violence is Considered a Disciplinary Violation

76% of male and female survey respondents knew that being found guilty of domestic violence in court is something that could result in being dismissed from the RSLAF. 82% of female respondents knew this to be the case compared to 70% of men.

Few personnel report knowledge of positive bonding experiences (for example, sports, co-ed formal activities, training, and/or orientation programs).

When asked about bonding activities they were aware of in RSLAF, only 19% of male and female respondents reported knowledge of positive bonding experiences in the armed forces.
Some Personnel Brag About Sexual Experiences Together Outside Work

While sexual relations between personnel are violations of the code of conduct, there is some suggestive evidence from the survey that at least some personnel may have engaged in these activities. While survey respondents were not asked if they had personally engaged in these activities, they were asked if they had ever heard of other members of RSLAF engaging in these acts. Among respondents, 22% of male and female respondents reported that they had heard of other members of the RSLAF bragging about having sex to one another. 26% of female respondents reported this behavior compared to 18% of male respondents. Bragging consists of speaking to peers in a boastful manner about sexual encounters or relationships.

Some Personnel Worry About Being Accused of Sexual Harassment

44% of male and female respondents reported being worried or very worried about being accused of sexual harassment. 43% of male respondents and only 24% of female respondents reported being worried or very worried of these accusations.

LGBTQ+ Individuals are Not Allowed to Serve Openly

LGBTQ+ individuals are not allowed to serve in RSLAF, and same-sex relationships are not permitted in Sierra Leone. There is not a policy specific to LGBTQ+ individuals within RSLAF.

Certain Views of Masculinity May Lead to Difficulties for Women Engaging in RSLAF, Though These Views are Not Always Dominant Across Surveyed Respondents

The survey reveals that the personnel within RSLAF hold beliefs in certain masculine norms, which are not necessarily compatible with equal opportunities for men and women. However, these views are complex, and varied. It is important to note that everyone is entitled to their own opinions and beliefs. Nevertheless, it is the responsibility of security institutions to ensure that the work environment is inclusive and respectful, and that standards of conduct and behavior overshadow individual views on gender roles within the family and society. This is a matter of operational effectiveness; for institutions to function well, it is important for all personnel to be able to work together and trust each other. So, for example, it is necessary to ensure that respect for hierarchy or competence prevails over beliefs about obedience, or that the obligation to prevent and respond to SGBV prevails over views about rape culture or the acceptability of intra-family violence.

First, a majority of personnel strongly disapprove of rape, as rape is strongly disapproved across Sierra Leone. However, there is evidence that some personnel could be reluctant to believe claims of rape if it does occur.

For example, the majority of men believe that women sometimes lie about being raped. 52% of male and female respondents agreed or strongly agreed that women often falsely claim about being raped. Male respondents (58%) were more likely to agree or strongly agree that women often falsely claim about being raped compared to female respondents (46%). These numbers could suggest it may still be difficult for women to come forward, if they fear they will not be believed.

80% of respondents believed it is acceptable for a colleague to give a woman a compliment and tell her she is attractive. Under certain conditions, this may be viewed as a form of sexual harassment.

A strong majority of personnel (72% of the 387 people sampled) do not believe that it is ok for a husband to have sex with his wife even if she did not want to. This shows that rape culture is not widely accepted in the Sierra Leone military, and is broadly frowned upon by the vast majority of personnel.

Additionally, there is not acceptance of sexual relationships with children. 85% of male and female respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that it is better for women to get married while they are young (12-18yo).

65% of male and female respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that a man who is unsatisfied with his wife can be intimate with other women.
Second, personnel feel strongly that honor and duty are important, and that men should protect women’s dignity and purity.

89% of personnel agreed or strongly agreed that it is important for a man to be respected by other men.

Fortunately, 83% of male and female respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they would defend their reputation with violence if someone insulted them.

80% of male and female respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it is a man’s duty to protect his family’s dignity by watching over the purity of the women in his family.

Female respondents (48%) were more likely to report that women should not catch the gaze of men of who are not related to them than male respondents (43%).

Third, personnel accept that women and men may disagree within the household, and do not hold firm views about women’s obedience.

41% believed a good wife should listen to her husband despite disagreeing with him.

A majority of respondents, 58% disagreed or strongly disagreed that a woman should tolerate humiliation to keep her family together.

Fourth, personnel broadly accept that the worth of men and women is not dependent on their ability to have children.

74% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that a man should be embarrassed if he cannot have children. 76% of female respondents and 72% of male respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.
5) Conclusions: recommendations to leverage opportunities and overcome barriers

The empirical results from this study show that the three main barriers to women’s meaningful participation in peace operations are 1) peacekeeping infrastructure (Issue Area 5), 2) domestic constraints (Issue Area 4), and 3) deployment criteria (Issue Area 2). Social exclusion (Issue Area 10) and Gender Roles (Issue Area 9), also pose serious challenges for women in peace operations, and are ranked as “medium priority,” though they may influence other issue areas.

There is not strong alignment between how personnel and key-decision makers view the top barriers to women’s meaningful participation. Nor are there views of the top barriers in strict alignment with the results of the overall assessment. Neither personnel nor key decision makers named issues around deployment selection as a challenge for women, nor did they mention domestic constraints. However, personnel named peacekeeping infrastructure as a top barrier for women, which aligns with the empirical results. Both personnel and key-decision makers named challenges with deployment criteria as a top barrier. However, the empirical results show that criteria were a medium priority issue. Lastly, while many personnel viewed negative experiences on mission as a top challenge for female peacekeepers, there is almost no evidence that negative experiences have dampened enthusiasm for participation in peacekeeping missions. Discussions during the Oral Report clarified that because the last two major deployments on peacekeeping missions happened during the Ebola crisis in West African in 2014, many peacekeepers faced context specific challenges around homesickness, and difficulties within the mission.

**Personnel**

Respondents were asked to state, in an open-ended manner, what they thought were the main barriers for women on peace operations. Personnel were very divided in how they responded to these questions, and there was not evident consensus about what the top challenges were for women. The most frequently named challenges were 1) negative peacekeeping experiences (Issue Are 6), 2) peacekeeping infrastructure (Issue Area 5), and 3) social exclusion (Issue Area 10). Approximately 38% of surveyed personnel viewed negative experiences as a main barrier for women. In the open-ended responses, there was a great deal of discussion of issues with heat and tough weather conditions, negative emotions, and other difficulties on mission. Relatedly, 30% of personnel said infrastructure was a top issue. These frequently included issues around sleeping conditions, food and water provision, and sanitation.

Interestingly, surveyed men and women did have differing perspectives on what the top challenges are for women’s participation. Men were much more likely to select negative issues as a top challenge for women (47% of men and 30% of women), frequently citing the tough weather conditions as a reason women would struggle. While not a top issue, women were more likely to view issues of selection as a top issue for women’s participation (17% of women v. 10% of men). Similarly, 10% of women say issues with senior leadership as a barrier to women’s participation, while only 3% of men viewed this as an issue for women. Otherwise, results are similar.

All respondents were also asked what they saw as the top barriers for men in peacekeeping. The top issues named for men were, 1) peacekeeping infrastructure, 2) negative peacekeeping experiences, and 3) deployment criteria. Around 55% of personnel viewed infrastructure as a top challenge for men. The open-ended responses referenced similar issues for men and women but specified logistical challenges more frequently for men. Second, 34% of personnel viewed negative experiences as a top challenge for men. Here, weather conditions,
homesickness, and lack of access to sexual partners were most frequently named. Lastly, 16% of personnel said there were challenges with deployment criteria. These included access to training, and too rigid requirements.

There are only a few differences in how men and women viewed the challenges specifically posed to men. Men were more likely to name negative experiences for themselves than women were (42% of men v. 26% of women). Men also say infrastructure as a larger barrier for men than women did. 62% of men viewed this as a top challenge for men, while 48% of women viewed it as such. Interestingly, women were more likely to point to biases within the selection process as a challenge for men (13% of women v. 7% of men).

**Key Decision-Makers**

When key decision-makers were asked what they thought were the main challenges for women on peace operations, the three most frequently mentioned barriers were 1) deployment criteria, 2) the population of eligible women and 3) gender roles. Approximately 73% of interviewed key-decision makers (all men), listed deployment criteria as a top barrier for women. These included qualifications, training gaps, and issues around eligibility due to rank or years of experience. Many decision makers were concerned that women were not able to meet the physical requirements necessary for deployment, and lacked education or literacy, which is required for deployment as an observer. A total of 50% of key decision makers also noted that the eligible population of women is too low, and therefore RSLAF cannot meet UN quotas. Another 31% mentioned issues related to gender roles as a key issue for women’s meaningful participation. These open-ended questions included responses about the lack of women’s empowerment, views among women that peacekeeping was a male affair, cultural views about female peacekeepers as being too troublesome, and other similar responses.

All key-decision makers were aware that women faced specific barriers to meaningful participation, and most key decision-making personnel agreed about the nature of these challenges. However, it is worth noting that many key decision makers viewed the challenges for women were inherent, and therefore difficult to change. For example, while there was widespread agreement that deployment criteria were a top issue, some key decision-makers viewed this an issue round rank, education level, or training gaps; while others viewed it as a primarily physical barrier. Several other personnel claimed that laziness posed a serious challenge to women’s interest in peacekeeping as well as their drive to achieve the necessary qualifications.

Key decision-makers held different opinions about the challenges men faced within peacekeeping operations. They most frequently named 1) deployment criteria, 2) the selection process, and 3) moral standards. Of interviewed key decision-makers, 70% viewed deployment criteria as a challenge. Similarly, to women, they frequently pointed to issues to training or education and tough physical requirements, but the most frequently named criteria was on disciplinary records. In addition, 34% of key decision-makers viewed the selection process as a main barrier for men, most often because they saw efforts to select women as making it more difficult for men to be selected. Lastly, while it is difficult to place within one of the 10 issue areas, 47% of key decision makers named either moral standards or sexual abuse and harassment as a top barrier for men.

**a) Best practices to share**

- The RSLAF organically conducted focus group with women to better understand their individual needs (Issue Area 8)
- The RSLAF engage in efforts to integrate women and men into many training and social activities (Issue Area 9)
- There are strong institutions for women to support other women (Issue Area 8)
b) Main recommendations to overcome the barriers:

- Quotas or affirmative action policies to ensure women access career courses.
- Alteration of uniforms and boots to accommodate women’s bodies.
- Inclusion of women within promotion boards, and selection/nomination committees.
- Develop mechanisms to ensure that women are promoted and placed into leadership positions.
- International bodies and foreign militaries funding career courses should ensure some scholarships are held for female officers.
- Require male and female (up to certain rank) personnel to attend the funerals of soldiers.
- Vehicles used for training and testing driver’s should accommodate all heights, so that all personnel can improve driving skills.
- If Sierra Leone plans to deploy battalions in the future, they must ensure more widespread knowledge of opportunities and criteria for selection.
- Better understand why there are high rates of failure for the exam and address issues.
- Ensure that personnel do not have to pay expenses for taking the exam.
- Purposeful and formal inclusion of women within discussions of maternal and family policies which disproportionately affect women.
- Conduct a gendered needs assessment within RSLAF specifically focused on health for both men and women.
- Invest in training female medical practitioners who can deploy.
- Opening childcare facilities for infants and young children, which ensure women have a place to nurse.
- Ensure that personnel understand different leave policies and update parental leave policies nationally.
- Better understand the social stigma women face for deploying.
- Inclusion of specialists in women’s healthcare, including on mission.
- Improving access to birth control on missions, to ensure continuity in contraception and treatment of common medical conditions.
- Reorganization of barracks and toilet facilities to allow separate facilities for men and women.
- Encourage and provide information on how personnel can engage in mentorship opportunities while on mission.
- Better understand why and fix the problems with payment for UN deployments.
- Provide more training on cultural adjustments.
- Develop a better system for dispersing food rations.
- Ensure that men and women are treated equitably when it comes to being able to leave the compound or base.
- Consider promoting the efforts of peacekeepers at the national level with monuments or celebrations.
- Purposeful promotion of women into senior leadership roles, specialist roles, and throughout logistical or strategic roles, where women are currently underrepresented or their value is not fully recognized.
- Ensure the fair and equitable distribution of work outside of formal duties.
- Promote women’s leadership capabilities as a part of a campaign.
- Internal complaint system must be institutionalized and separate from commanding officers, to ensure they cannot overrule complaints from below.
• Expansion of gender directorate and deployment of gender focal points following gender sensitivity training.
• Separation of barracks for men and women to ensure safety.

c) Topics for further investigation

• Better investigate the health challenges of women in the RSALF, including mental health, reproductive health, and general wellbeing.
• Better investigate the social stigma that women face.
• Better understand why personnel fail tests needed for deployment.
• Better understand why some personnel are extended but others are not
• Better understand why there are problems with payment for those who are deployed.
• Better understand and prepare for the challenges that personnel face upon return from the mission, including relationship challenges.
The Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces

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