

# The Future of Peacekeeping Needs Everyone: A Path Forward for Women's Meaningful Participation in Peace Operations

## Executive Summary

**Women's participation is essential for effective peacekeeping.** Despite commitments under the UN Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, women remain underrepresented in UN peace operations, particularly in leadership and operational roles. The Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) assessment<sup>1</sup> has been completed in 20 Troop- and Police- Contributing Countries (TPCCs) and reveals continued barriers to women's meaningful participation.

A meta-analysis of these MOWIPs reveals four persistent key barriers:

1. **Noticeable underrepresentation of women in security institutions in leadership and operational, tactical, and leadership roles**, despite some promising exceptions among TPCCs.
2. **Patriarchal values, gender stereotypes, and beliefs within security personnel** about what men and women “can” do are deeply ingrained. The data demonstrate that personnel often reinforce these gender divisions within missions. These same norms also influence deployment decisions.
3. **Perceived favoritism:** Data indicate that a proportion of personnel believe gender inclusion efforts disadvantage men. This signals that parity initiatives may face resistance when perceived to stem from gendered favoritism.
4. **A lack of systematic policies and understanding of women's needs** (e.g. care responsibilities, facilities and equipment) continues to hinder the creation of an enabling environment for women's meaningful participation across TPCCs' security institutions.

These key findings are applied to the “Future of Peacekeeping” study to inform future UN missions. With 30 models coupled with key capabilities, we argue that by ensuring that the above barriers do not hinder women's participation in any of the models, we can **make peacekeeping better – more effective, more efficient, and more fit for purpose**.

Models which might lead to reinforcing women's exclusion 1) do not mention gender-responsiveness as a particular capability, and/or 2) emphasize combat, rapid deployment, and high-security and operations-related skills.

We also classify the models into three categories in terms of how much institutional change, pre-deployment effort, and intervention — including political will — is needed to ensure women's meaningful participation. Both the UN and TPCCs have an important role to play in ensuring that future peacekeeping models will enable women's meaningful participation and more gender-responsive missions. We encourage more TPCCs to complete a MOWIP assessment to identify and thereafter address the specific barriers in their security institutions.

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<sup>1</sup> See: Sabrina Karim, *MOWIP Methodology* (01 October 2020). <https://www.dcaf.ch/mowip-methodology>

Finally, we provide recommendations for TPCCs and the UN to mitigate barriers across mission models. First and foremost, all mission mandates should include specific reference to gender responsiveness.

## **Recommended interventions for TPCCs**

- Promotion of women to leadership positions based on a diverse set of skills.
- Recruitment campaigns targeting women for all model types of missions.
- Sensitization campaigns and training on gender stereotypes to all personnel.
- Needs assessments of both men and women for all mission models.
- Adequate facilities, policies, and institutions that allow men and women to deploy rapidly (e.g. childcare centers).
- Adequate infrastructure for women and men in all different types of mission settings in line with the Elsie Initiative for Field Missions Guidance.
- Implementation of policies that enable sharing household obligations (e.g. parental leave policies).
- Adequate provision of services for women and men to have access to mental health, reproductive health, and to ensure their physical wellbeing in all types of mission settings.
- Joint training for civilian and uniformed personnel to create ready-to-deploy mixed (civilian/uniformed) units.
- Training all personnel, especially those in more militarized units, on skills required to succeed in current and future security contexts – such as interpersonal communication, trust-building, de-escalation, and negotiation.

## **Recommended interventions for the UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO)**

- Work with TPCCs to track women's inclusion in military and police forces over time, especially across different roles.
- Develop goals for TPCCs that move beyond parity to indicators of gender-responsiveness.
- Document and develop criteria for skills required to succeed in current and future security contexts, such as interpersonal communication, trust building, and negotiation.

## **Recommended interventions for both UN DPO and TPCCs**

- Create rosters of women who have the skill sets needed to deploy for all models.
- Provide specialized training to women on different skill sets to ensure women have the capabilities needed for all mission models.
- Provide training on gender protection norms, gender stereotypes, and gender backlash for personnel of all ranks, including senior leadership.
- Screen for personnel who have any misconduct violations.

- Reconceptualize pre-deployment training so that it integrates different skill sets (use of force and protection-oriented, and skills such as interpersonal communication, trust-building, de-escalation and negotiation).
- Circulate sensitization campaigns which clarify that men and women should prioritize different skill sets, including skills required to succeed in current and future security contexts – such as interpersonal communication, trust-building, de-escalation, and negotiation.

The [Pledging Guide for the 2025 Berlin United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial](#) highlights the importance of Women, Peace, and Security through recommendations for member states' support for women's meaningful participation (pg. 14). Many of the proposed pledges align with the above proposed recommendations.

**The Policy Brief is available at:** [Global Alliance for Peace Operations](#) and [The Future of Peacekeeping Needs Everyone | DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance](#)

**Mission models, benefits of gender-responsiveness and level of support needed to ensure women's meaningful participation and gender responsiveness more broadly**

<b>Mission Model</b>	<b>How women's meaningful participation — and gender-responsiveness more broadly — strengthens the model</b>	<b>Level of Effort</b>
<b>1. Preventative Deployments</b>	Early warning systems that include women and women's knowledge networks via communication with peacekeepers have improved knowledge about violence escalation and can better prevent conflict.	High
<b>2. Atrocity Prevention</b>	Atrocities affect men and women in different ways, with men more likely to die and women more likely to experience SGBV. Women's meaningful participation in the mission and gender-responsiveness ensures different protection strategies.	High
<b>3. Protection of Civilians</b>	Women's meaningful participation in the mission and gender-responsiveness enables better detection of violence and a wider range of strategies for the protection of different populations.	Lower
<b>4. Ceasefire Monitoring and Observation</b>	Women's meaningful participation in the mission and gender-responsiveness ensure that more intelligence is gathered about violations of ceasefires.	Medium
<b>5. Monitoring, Observation, and Reporting</b>	Women's meaningful participation in the mission and gender-responsiveness enables a full monitoring of the range of provisions in a peace agreement. Supporting and ensuring women's participation in peace agreements.	Medium
<b>6. Verification</b>	Women's meaningful participation in the mission and gender-responsiveness create more opportunities to gather intelligence on violations to arms control agreements.	High
<b>7. Support of Peace Agreements</b>	Peace agreements vary in provisions; women's meaningful participation in the mission and gender-responsiveness ensures that all parts of a peace agreement receive support from the mission. It also ensures that implementation benefits all parts of the population. Support for women's participation in the peace agreements.	Lower
<b>8. New State Support</b>	The creation of new institutions is an opportunity to structure them in equitable ways. Women's meaningful participation in the mission and gender-responsiveness ensures that new institutions in states are equitable.	Lower

<b>9. Transition Assistance</b>	Transitions provide opportunities to create new government institutions in more equitable ways. Women's meaningful participation in the mission and gender-responsiveness ensures that new institutions in states are equitable.	Medium
<b>10. Transitional Administration</b>	When missions assume governance responsibilities, they set an example for future state leaders. Women's meaningful participation in the mission and gender-responsiveness in the mission sets an example for state governance going forward.	Medium
<b>11. Election Security and Assistance</b>	Female candidates often face more harassment (including online) than male candidates. Election security thus means understanding the gendered ways that different candidates experience violence and intimidation. Women's meaningful participation in the mission and gender-responsiveness also ensures that civic education and knowledge sharing include women.	Medium
<b>12. Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration</b>	Female combatants are often left out of DDR processes and gender is often a recruitment tool for insurgents (e.g. whether promises of marriage or references to masculinity). Without a gendered understanding of these dynamics, comprehensive DDR is not possible.	Medium
<b>13. Security Sector Reform and Governance</b>	Creating security forces that serve all people means that specialized knowledge about gender inclusiveness is required. Women's meaningful participation in the mission and gender-responsiveness ensures that expertise is included in security sector reform.	Lower
<b>14. Rule of Law/Law Enforcement Support</b>	Laws pertaining to women's rights are often less likely to be enforced. Women's meaningful participation in the mission and gender-responsive peacekeeping help ensure that women's rights are enforced.	Lower
<b>15. Police Assistance</b>	Professionalized police forces that ensure civilian protection require gender-responsiveness in domestic security sectors as security needs are gendered. Women's meaningful participation in the mission helps motivate local women to become involved in police forces and encourages reporting.	Medium
<b>16. Support to Accountability Mechanisms</b>	Transitional justice mechanisms must ensure that all crimes are investigated, including ones related to SGBV. Additionally, the rape of men is often coded as torture and not SGBV. As such, gendered	Medium

	understanding of war crimes are necessary for full accountability.	
<b>17. Counter Organized Crime</b>	Criminal organizations often include women in their operations, and many criminal groups operate human trafficking rings. Expertise on how criminal groups use gender is necessary to counter organized crime.	High
<b>18. Mine Action and Explosive Ordinance Removal</b>	Women often have different knowledge networks about the locations of mines. Without fully engaging all parts of the population, successful mine clearing is not possible.	High
<b>19. Emergency Humanitarian Response</b>	Women and men experience displacement in different ways, especially when considering female-headed households. Humanitarian and refugee response is not possible without understanding these differential needs.	Medium
<b>20. Public Health Support</b>	Containing disease requires trust in medical authorities, which means strong community outreach and diversity in healthcare providers. Women's meaningful participation in the mission and gender-responsiveness is necessary for understanding how best to approach different populations for immunizations and healthcare.	Lower
<b>21. Natural Disaster Response</b>	Women are more likely to be affected by climate change and also more likely to take active steps towards minimizing harms from climate change, suggesting that they must be incorporated into disaster prevention and response.	Medium
<b>22. Humanitarian Accompaniment/ Protection</b>	Civilian protection, including accompaniment, requires understanding the different ways that men and women are impacted by war.	High
<b>23. Cultural Heritage Protection</b>	Caretaking responsibility of cultural heritage sites are often gendered, which means that women have insight into how best to protect such sites and which sites are sacred.	High
<b>24. Natural Resource Protection</b>	Natural resource extraction often employs male labor, creating disproportionate numbers of men in certain spaces and are thus sometimes accompanied by human trafficking or increases in sex work. A complete understanding of natural resource economies would include these factors and is not possible without gender analysis. Furthermore, women are actively involved in the protection of natural resources and should be included in protection efforts given their knowledge and networks.	High

<b>25. Border Management</b>	SGBV can be pervasive at border crossings, especially as illicit trafficking occurs. Women's meaningful participation in peace operations and gender-responsiveness ensures that protection of all civilians is incorporated into border management.	High
<b>26. Infrastructure Security</b>	Key infrastructure is often understood to be military targets, however women's meaningful participation in peace operations and gender-responsiveness ensures that key infrastructure that is crucial for survival such as farmlands, markets, etc., are also protected.	High
<b>27. Cybersecurity</b>	Different groups of people might be more susceptible to data breaches, disinformation, and (phishing) scams, meaning that public awareness and education campaigns are necessary, especially among women who may have less information.	High
<b>28. Regional Security</b>	There are existing networks of transnational cooperation and partnerships. Women's meaningful participation in peace operations and gender-responsive approach could help tap into existing regional networks.	High
<b>29. City Security</b>	Women and men navigate city spaces in different ways, and cities are often designed to privilege men. Women's perspectives in city security would look vastly different than men's perspectives.	High
<b>30. Maritime Security</b>	Piracy, and other maritime security threats, depend on women, who sometimes help service illicit trade and are involved in recruitment activities. Maritime security is heavily male dominated, which means that there are gendered consequences related to sex economies and human trafficking that must be taken into consideration.	High

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