OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN PEACEKEEPING:

POLICY SERIES

POLICY BRIEF 5 | OCTOBER 2021

Saving the world, one gender training at a time

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The Elsie Initiative is a multilateral pilot project that uses the Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) methodology to research barriers to and opportunities for women's meaningful participation in peace operations in seven pilot countries. A comparative analysis of data from MOWIP reports, as well as their primary findings, inform this policy brief series.

This policy brief is about how troop- and police-contributing countries (TPCCs) can leverage gender training, as one part of broader institutional transformation processes, to enhance women's meaningful participation in peace operations[2] and to develop truly gender-responsive peacekeeping.

1 Aiko Holvikivi's work was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council [grant number ES/V006126/1].

2 See the MOWIP Methodology Section 2 ("Overview of the MOWIP methodology") for more details on what 'meaningful participation' refers to and why it is necessary.

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Introduction

What is peacekeeper gender training?

Gender training is mandated by the United Nations' Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda[3] and most regional and national action plans on WPS establish a commitment to provide gender training to deployed peacekeepers. As a result, an increasing number of countries worldwide train their peacekeepers on gender, complemented in this effort by the UN as well as national and regional peacekeeping centres.

Peacekeeper gender training[4] focuses on increasing awareness of how women and men experience conflict differently and equipping peacekeepers to address gendered security needs in host countries. The most common topics covered in such training include: the WPS agenda, conflict-related sexual violence, and sexual exploitation and abuse. In effect, gender training revolves around the external aspects of peacekeeping.[5]

What does it have to do with women peacekeepers?

The same policy framework that mandates gender training also calls for the deployment of more women as peacekeepers. Recruiting, retaining and deploying women in traditionally masculine institutions requires processes of institutional transformation to create an environment in which all personnel are valued and able to contribute meaningfully. These include the creation of gender-equal systems and structures such as accountability and oversight mechanisms, flexible work policies, and fair recruitment and promotion practices.

Gender training can support efforts to create inclusive working environments when it addresses internal institutional dynamics and discriminatory mindsets and attitudes. In areas such as international development, gender training has been defined as a 'tool and a strategy to effect individual and collective transformation towards gender equality through consciousness raising, empowering learning, knowledge building, and skill development.'[6] However, the potential of gender training is not fully harnessed in current peacekeeper gender training policies or practices, which focus on operational activities in the mission area at the expense of internal organisational cultures and structures.

Gender training: main findings from the MOWIP pilot countries

Peacekeeper gender training has the potential to contribute to gender equality in peace operations...

Among other considerations, the MOWIP methodology looks at the training deployed personnel receive on gender-related topics. Data from four pilot countries[7] was analysed to identify correlations between completing gender training and demonstrating specific gender equality knowledge, skills and attitudes.

MOWIP data[8] shows that gender training is widespread among security sector personnel, especially deployed personnel, across different contexts. In addition, MOWIP findings reveal a strong correlation between attending gender training and being aware of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on WPS. In other words, gender training is effective in transmitting information within the current policy frame. Security sector institutions increasingly create spaces and opportunities through gender training that could be used to explore both operational work and internal transformative exchanges around gender.

3 See UN Security Council Res. 2106 (16 December 2010). UN Doc S/RES/2016, para. 8.

4 See for example the UN Department of Peace Operations' Core Pre-Deployment Training Materials.

5 For more detailed information on peacekeeper gender training, please see Aiko Holvikivi (2021). "Training the Troops on Gender. The Making of a Transnational Practice?", International Peacekeeping 28(2): 175-199.

6 UN Women Training Centre (2015). "Training for Gender Equality: Twenty Years On, A review of how training for gender equality has evolved from Beijing Platform for Action in 1995".

7 The Zambia Police Service, the Ghana Armed Forces, the Uruguay Armed Forces, the Senegal Police and Gendarmerie.

8 The data from the four completed MOWIP assessments was processed by the Cornell GSS Lab using the MOWIP methodology. For more details on how the MOWIP data was processed and analysed, please check Section 4 of the MOWIP methodology or contact Dr. Sabrina Karim at the Cornell University Gender and Security Sector (GSS) Lab at: smk349@cornell.edu.

… if used for this purpose.

Indeed, MOWIP findings show that gender stereotypes, preconceived attitudes about women, and the failure to treat women as equal members of the team are consistently among the highest barriers to women's meaningful participation in peace operations. Further, personnel who hold rigid or discriminatory views on gender are more likely to say that they would use violence in the performance of their duties, are less likely to consider prohibited conduct a serious violation and are less likely to report such conduct by colleagues.[9] This means that in addition to limiting the meaningful participation of women, discriminatory views on gender can hinder performance and compliance with rules of conduct.

MOWIP data shows no correlation between attending gender training and having a more equal view of gender roles or holding less discriminatory views. This is not surprising, given that gender training mandates largely focus on operational aspects of gender in peacekeeping, but it does point to underutilised potential of gender training.

What are we advocating?

In light of these findings, policy mandates should address the need for a shift in peacekeepers' attitudes, behaviours and institutional cultures. Security sector institutions and UN peacekeeping training providers should leverage existing training initiatives to improve women's meaningful participation internally, in addition to improving the security services provided externally. Gender-responsive peacekeeping meets the gendered security needs of men, women, boys and girls in the host community and promotes the full and equal participation of men and women. Gender training that focuses on gender in external operations but leaves out the mindsets and attitudes of those who conduct these operations, falls short of achieving this goal. Only by considering these dimensions as two sides of the same coin can gender training start to make a real contribution towards the meaningful participation of women whilst also supporting mission legitimacy and success.

How to leverage gender training more effectively

Address aspects of women's meaningful participation in the security sector and in peace operations

Gender training has the potential to develop peacekeepers' attitudes and behaviours regarding gender norms and thus support changes in institutional culture. For this potential to be realised, training mandates need to address internal institutional dynamics. This may include examining power dynamics among personnel of different genders and ranks; how gender stereotypes may affect career progression; how gender bias may harm the working environment; or how structures and policies may be inequitable or discriminatory towards certain groups.

Explicitly discussing the reasons behind and the problems caused by women's under-representation in security institutions is an important first step. However, gender knowledge alone does not change behaviour. It must be accompanied by a belief in the importance of participation as well as motivation, confidence, and opportunities for application. It is important to bear in mind that gender training is only one part of a broader plan for organizational change. Individual learners cannot find opportunities for application and are unlikely to find motivation or confidence to address institutional dynamics, if the power dynamics or physical or policy infrastructure of the institution work against them. This makes training a necessary but not a sufficient condition for institutional reform.[10]

9 Huber, L., S. Karim, and L. Pruett (2021). "The Commando Effect: The Impact of Gender on Misconduct, among Security Force Personnel using Experimental Survey Evidence from Four Countries," unpublished manuscript, courtesy of authors.

10 See policy brief 3 of this series, "Institutional Culture Reboot".

Expand the reach of gender training

MOWIP data shows that women are much more likely than men to be sent to gender training. Particularly in institutions dominated by men, it is important that both men and women are trained on how to incorporate a gender perspective in their work. Further, gender training is sometimes limited to operational personnel who deploy to peace operations. In order to address the institutional barriers that impede women's meaningful participation, non-deployed personnel, including those in managerial, supportive, and administrative roles, should also be trained on gender.

Substantively, training often presents gender as synonymous with women and their vulnerabilities.[11] Addressing the lived experiences and insecurities of women in the host community is an important component of the peacekeeping mandate. However, an exclusive focus on women can feed into a false narrative of women's experiences as singular and homogeneous. Training should consider how gender intersects with other axes of power, such as race/ethnicity, (dis)ability and/or class, among others.[12] Further, focusing on women alone closes off space to consider how ideas about men and masculinities shape the conduct of peace operations. In short, an exclusive focus on women can impede an understanding of the structures of power and inequality that produce these experiences in the first place.

Gender dynamics in peace operations are linked to internal dynamics of security sector institutions. For example, jokes denigrating women or trivialising harassment create an environment which enables discrimination and even violence. If disrespectful behaviour against colleagues is tolerated, this is likely to lead to violations against the local population in peace operations as well. Drawing these links involves critically examining one's own experiences of and internalised beliefs about gender.[13] Understanding how these dynamics play out in our own lives is a critical step to understanding how gender dynamics play out in other contexts. Training that addresses discriminatory behaviour within the institution or in the home country is likely to also improve peacekeepers' behaviour towards local populations.

Ensure the quality and impact of training

The final step to leveraging the potential of training is to ensure its quality: training must be designed to facilitate potentially difficult conversations around individual attitudes and institutional cultures. Research suggests that this is primarily a matter of ensuring sufficient time and expertise, including proficiency in delivering adult education.

Too often gender training is conducted as a one-off, timebound, ad-hoc intervention. While the inclusion of gender subjects in pre-deployment training is an important step, this is often not sufficient to engage in the types of transformative adult learning that are required to explore how gender dynamics play out in one's own life and work. It is crucial that gender training is allocated enough time in institutional training curricula in addition to pre-deployment preparations to achieve its learning outcomes. Integrating gender training throughout professional training and education curricula from the initial or induction training onwards fosters the conditions in which this training can achieve its intended outcomes.

A wealth of excellent training materials is freely available to support such training, including curricula produced by the United Nations, regional and national peacekeeping training centres, and civil society actors in the field of development and humanitarian aid. However, an important criterion for effective training is that it is tailored to the local context and culture of the TPCC as well as the mission area. Transformative gender training may take on different forms in different contexts, and so it is essential that such training utilises local and national expertise and draws on diverse perspectives.

11 See Whitworth, S., (2004). Men, Militarism & UN Peacekeeping: A Gendered Analysis. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers and Puechguirbal, N., (2010). "Discourses on Gender, Patriarchy and Resolution 1325: A Textual Analysis of UN Documents", International Peacekeeping, 17:2, 172–187.

12 For a further discussion of intersectionality in the security sector see Box 2: Intersectionality citing Kimblerlé Crenshaw (1991), "Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color", Stanford Law Review, 43, 1241–1299 in DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN Women, (2019), "Security Sector Governance, Security Sector Reform and Gender" in Gender and Security Toolkit, Geneva: DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN Women, 7.

13 Laplonge, D., (2015), "The Absence of Masculinity in Gender Training for UN Peacekeepers", Peace Review 27:1, 91–9.

Finally, it should be noted that addressing power dynamics and gender relations in one's own life can be a challenging process. It is important that gender trainers are specifically trained, mentored, and provided opportunities to develop their expertise and experience in facilitating such learning. This also has implications for how the effectiveness of training is assessed. Feedback questionnaires completed by participants after training primarily measure whether learners liked the training or trainer, which is not the same thing as measuring whether or what they learned. The contribution of training may be more accurately assessed by its effectiveness in creating space for critical thinking and exchange. Ultimately, its contribution is in how participants apply what they learn: in other words, what the impact of the training is.[14]

Policy recommendations

1 Policymakers at international and national levels

- Ensure that the policy mandate for gender training explicitly addresses gender equality and women's meaningful participation within the institution as well as in peacekeeping.
- Include internal considerations in policy commitments relating to the United Nations' WPS agenda.

2 Security institutions

- Embed gender training within broader organizational change processes aimed at removing barriers for women in peacekeeping.
- Involve both men and women across different functional specialisations (not only operational ones) in training initiatives.

3 Security institutions and UN training providers

- Ensure that adequate time and resources are in place to ensure high-quality, effective training.
- Ensure that training is appropriate for the context: draw on local or national expertise to develop the training and include diverse perspectives on experiences of conflict.

4 Training curriculum designers and trainers

- Frame gender as something that has both institutional and operational dimensions, and that is relevant to both men and women.
- Design training to address attitudes and behaviours as well as knowledge and technical skills.

14 Annex 1 to this policy brief suggests ways of evaluating the impact of training.

Good practices and further resources for training providers

- Apply transformative adult learning principles to address personal attitudes, beliefs and behaviours regarding gender with learners[15]: Integrate methods and concepts from masculinities training[16] and from 'pedagogy for the powerful' (i.e. techniques aimed at engaging "those who inhabit positions of power")[17] in peacekeeper gender training.
- Measure and document the contribution of gender training to changing behaviours and mindsets in security institutions or peace operations settings (see Annex 1).
- Consider that gender learning can take place effectively beyond the classroom: gender training can be complemented with other ongoing initiatives, such as same-gender and mixed-gender coaching,[18] mentoring[19], discussion spaces[20], etc.

15 Lysychkina, I., A. Hildenbrand, and K. Reid-Martinez, (2016). "Adult Learning Principles and Transformative Learning in Teaching Gender", in PfPC SSRWG and EDWG, (2016), Handbook on Teaching Gender in the Military, Geneva: DCAF and PfPC, 101-111.

16 See for instance case study 7 "Masculinity training for the Pakistan police" in DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN Women, (2019), "Policing and Gender" in Gender and Security Toolkit, Geneva: DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN Women, 52. See also training resources on engaging men and boys for gender equality such as MenEngage (2019). "Engaging Men and Boys to Address Gender Equality".

17 Cornwall, A., (2016). "Towards a Pedagogy for the Powerful", Power, Poverty and Inequality, IDS Bulletin 47:5.

18 See Olsson, L., and A. Björsson, (2017). "Gender Training for Leaders: The Swedish Gender Coach Program", Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security.

19 Exposure to women mentors can provide men with opportunities to learn about gender bias. See Prime, J., and C.A. Moss-Racusin, (2009). "Engaging Men in Gender Initiatives: What Change Agents Need to Know", Catalyst.

20 See for instance the Barbershop concept of men group discussion for gender equality described in HeForShe, (2017). "Barbershop Toolbox".

THE ELSIE INITIATIVE
FOR WOMEN IN PEACE OPERATIONS

Launched by Canada in 2017, the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations is an innovative multilateral pilot project that is developing and testing a combination of approaches to help overcome barriers and increase the meaningful participation of uniformed women in UN peace operations, with a focus on police and military roles.

Canada

NORWEGIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

DCAF acknowledges the financial support of Global Affairs Canada and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the production of this Policy Brief.

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Graphic design by Stephanie Pierce-Conway