

DEPARTMENT OF PEACE OPERATIONS

# PRACTICE NOTE

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND MEANINGFUL  
PARTICIPATION IN PEACEKEEPING CONTEXTS



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Photo by Francesca Mold/UNMISS



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 20th anniversary of the United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) in 2020 was an opportunity to take stock on progress, challenges and opportunities towards the implementation of the WPS agenda. Of priority being the strengthening of women's full, equal, and meaningful participation in peace and political processes as well as the systemic integration of gender and WPS in all aspects of peacekeeping. Articulated as a political imperative, in the Secretary General's Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative, and in the A4P+ plan, WPS is central to enhancing operational effectiveness in peacekeeping and sustaining peace.

Amidst the Covid 19 pandemic limitations, the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) reviewed progress and challenges to women's leadership, and full, equal and meaningful participation in peace and political processes. Stirred by women's experiences shared in a round table discussion with the UN Secretary-General and women leaders from Darfur, Cyprus, the Central African Republic (CAR) and Mali that culminated into [the Secretary General's Call to Action on Women Transforming Peace in Peacekeeping contexts](#) (CtA) and following the recommendations of the [Policy Brief on Women Transforming Peace](#), DPO saw the need to further assess ongoing good and promising practices in peacekeeping contexts in line with the core priority areas encapsulated in the CtA; investing in community local networks, harnessing data and gender analysis, leveraging women's mobilising power, systematising women's leadership in conflict prevention and fostering dynamic partnerships.

This Practice Note therefore, constitutes empirical evidence highlighting women's leadership, and full, equal and meaningful participation in peace and political processes in peacekeeping contexts in five missions namely UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Despite the existing barriers and structural limitations, women's agency is manifest in peacekeeping contexts. Their individual and collective engagement is dynamic, with a transformative impact on the implementation of mission mandates within host nations and communities. Women's mobilizing power and role in fostering sustainable peace is manifest in their active engagement and influence on formal and informal processes of conflict prevention. Their participation in peace negotiations and transition mechanisms creates space for "their" stories of resilience, empowerment and primacy in politics and decision making to be shared. Their leadership and influence are to be maximized upon in decision making from a whole-of-society approach to move toward durable peace.

Evidence from the selected case studies illustrates how peacekeeping missions are supporting and enhancing women's leadership and participation during crisis and in transitions through gender sensitive mandates, political support and shared resources that allow for innovation; a pathway to the realization of WPS commitments. In their local grassroots networks, women are collectively bringing change as peace builders, rights defenders, women leaders, activists, and technical experts. Their vast approaches and initiatives form the basis of good practices for learning and replication within-mission and across missions.

By lessons learnt, the Practice Note makes recommendations for the institutionalisation of WPS mandate implementation based on shared power, shared responsibilities and shared accountability between women in their diversity and as primary actors and stakeholders in peace and political processes. By tapping into the dynamic partnerships of women and investing in grassroots women leaders and their networks, we accelerate the realisation of the Secretary-General's Call to Action, the implementation of the WPS and Humanitarian Action Compact (WPSHA) commitments, of which DPO is a signatory, and enhance UN peacekeeping missions' operational effectiveness.

# OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND PURPOSE

This Practice Note shares good practices on women's leadership and meaningful participation in peace processes supported by peacekeeping missions. First, it documents women's shared experiences and contributes knowledge to peacekeeping stakeholders. Second, it highlights pathways that women leaders, in collaboration with peacekeeping missions, have created to enhance women's leadership and meaningful participation in peace and political processes and on WPS mandate implementation. Finally, it outlines lessons learnt and actionable measures for peacekeeping missions and partners to leverage on and scale.

The criterion of selection of missions for the Practice Note is informed by the robustness of gender and WPS language in mission mandates; existing gender architecture; evidence available from data generated from WPS quarterly reporting; anecdotal evidence from missions' strategic engagement and contribution to DPO Headquarters' priorities; as well as demonstration of transformative good practices in high-level political platforms and processes. The good practices, lessons learnt, and challenges highlight areas for improvement as well as areas for greater investment with possibilities for consideration and replication in other contexts.

Methodologically: The Practice Note draws and synergizes the contributions and experiences of various WPS practitioners through a participatory data collection process via interviews and focus discussions with mission staff, women leaders and organizations at the local and national levels. Secondary data comprises WPS normative frameworks, policy and practice documents from existing peacekeeping mandates, DPO WPS Annual Reports, the UN Secretary-General's Annual Report on WPS, existing analytical briefs from WPS quarterly reports, mission-specific reports, UN Secretary General's periodical Country-specific Reports to the Security Council and A4P reports [1].

## OVERVIEW: WPS IN UN PEACEKEEPING CONTEXTS

Peacekeeping continues to be an effective tool in the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security with WPS topping the UN agenda since the passage of UNSCR1325 (2000). The A4P initiative outlines WPS as a political imperative in peace and political processes and a catalyst for enhanced operational effectiveness in peacekeeping. This notwithstanding, several factors continue to undermine the ability to deliver on gender equality in specific and the broader WPS agenda in general. The complex and fragile environment as well as the multiplicity of factors and political dynamics in host countries including financial constraints, personnel capacity limitations and, in some instances, weak WPS mandates each pose a major threat to women's leadership and their full, equal and meaningful participation in the spectrum of conflict prevention, peacebuilding, peacemaking and peacekeeping. Due to these dynamics and challenges, women's participation in peacekeeping contexts is still lagging. Women tend to be either not recognized or not fully engaged in decision making during transitional processes. Often, they are perceived as weak, vulnerable, and needing protection and not seen as a critical agent for transformation in stabilization efforts including elections, security, human rights, protections and overall governance. Through the networks of women leaders, the progress and impact of women's leadership and meaningful participation is evident. However, regression is equally rife given the unpredictable political and security environment in host countries further worsened by Covid 19 constrains.



With UN Security Council 1325 and subsequent related resolutions paving the road for the WPS agenda, the [Global Study on SCR 1325](#) (2015) acknowledges the continuous, disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls. Their contribution in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding remains undervalued, in light of the evidence showcasing their effective role as active agents in peace and security both at a grassroots and national level. The idea that women are ineffective at peace and political processes directly conflicts with the data which proves otherwise. To overcome the persistence of this patriarchal perspective, there is a need to document the good practices of women's leadership and meaningful participation to support mission leadership, host countries and Member States in sustaining the peace agenda.

## **A. WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP, AND FULL, EQUAL AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN PEACE AND POLITICAL PROCESSES**

Women's leadership and meaningful participation in peace and political processes is integral to efforts that make peacekeeping operations fit for purpose. Harnessing the agency of women leaders and organizations to inform, influence, and transform peace and political processes is key to sustaining peace and security[2]. For DPO, accelerating the implementation of the WPS commitments in the A4P, A4P Plus, and WPSHA Compact, particularly enhancing women's full and meaningful participation in peace processes, is a political imperative and a catalyst for enhanced operational effectiveness. Once operationalized, the WPS agenda has a multiplier effect in contributing to legitimization of conflict prevention and resolution outcomes. It enhances local ownership to related processes, strengthens people-centred approaches, enhances a protective environment, as well as drives sustainable, inclusive and long-lasting peace outcomes. These benefits are fully realised when there is direct, substantial engagement and genuine opportunity for women to comprehensively participate in both formal and informal fora. This includes exercising their equal rights to access civic spaces, be part of the solutions and decisions based on invaluable input from their lived experiences. Through their agency, women are central to transformative processes that move societies forward and out of instability.

## **B. INDICATORS ON WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP, AND FULL, EQUAL AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION**

Measures on full, equal and meaningful participation are determined by a host of metrics, some of which constitute "good and promising" practices. In peacekeeping contexts, indicators and enabling factors to women's full, equal and meaningful participation include, but are not limited to, strong gender and WPS language in the mission mandate, gender sensitive language in peace agreements, number of women participating in peace processes and implementation mechanisms [3]. Further indicators include women signatories to peace agreements, women official negotiators and mediators, women in early warning systems and response mechanisms as well as women in leadership positions in transitional governments, legislative assemblies, local councils and committees [4]. Other qualitative indicators are outcome related informed by compliance levels to WPS commitments and obligations, gender-responsivity of decisions i.e. evidenced based, data driven and/or informed by gender responsive analysis; innovative measures led by women to resolve situations or overcome barriers, shared data platforms with UN headquarter and mission leadership, taking action to change trajectories of exclusion and discrimination to transformative change and maximizing women's diverse roles, social capital, mobilization capacities and efforts.

2. Department of Peace Operations, Policy Brief: Women Transforming Peace Through Peacekeeping (2020) ('[w]omen leaders and women's organizations are the true guardians of the WPS agenda. DPO, UN Member States, and Security Council Members must ensure that women's full participation in peace processes is realized').

3. Global Study (2015), pages 15, 45.

4. Global Study (2015), pages 15, 45.



Photo by Rawan Maze, Lebanon.

### C. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS TO WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP, AND FULL, EQUAL AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

Despite women's leadership and networks having proved adaptable, resilient and effective, the breadth of women's knowledge, experience and expertise is frequently misrepresented or undervalued. Numerical increases in the number of women participants, whilst encouraging, often mask the reality that women are excluded from decision-making processes, especially if patriarchal structures are not dismantled. To be clear, *formal* patriarchal structures are most clearly identified when governing bodies determine women's participation in peace and political processes to be extraneous, barred or delegitimized. *Informal* patriarchal structures are those in which socio-cultural and political norms make women personae non-gratae in the decision making fora. Where representation is not systematized or backed by gendered analysis for responsive actions, underlying gaps remain. Even where present, anecdotal evidence in host nations shows that in some instances women's roles are symbolic rather than substantive and with tacit resistance.

For the five countries under study, historically embedded patriarchy of gender norms, values, language and consciousness have resulted in the creation and recreation of structural barriers, albeit to varied degrees. Regressive cultural attitudes, gender stereotypes and resistance informed by biases coupled with over reliance on anecdotal data for decision making are a draw back on several fronts and which is consistent with the slow uptick of the WPS agenda. While disaggregated data continues to be factored in most mission reports, the analytical aspects linking data to outcome and impact is minimal. Weak gender language in mission mandates and hegemonic gender-blind language tends to reproduce inequalities and reinforce discrimination especially in mission led processes and initiatives. The advancement of WPS is further undermined by limited investment targeting women in their diversity and constrained programmatic funding.

Whilst most of these challenges are prevalent in fragile contexts, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these hardships from divergent angles. At the wake of the pandemic, even with virtual adaptations, women's leadership and influence encountered severe drawbacks following restrictions on movement including, inter alia, limited digital access, digital illiteracy, financial constraints and shifting priorities away from WPS. Overall, there remains a disparity between the ubiquitous awareness of gender equality buttressed by the WPS frameworks on the one hand, and their actualization on the other.



## THE NORMATIVE APPEAL TO WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP, AND FULL, EQUAL AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

In the past five years the DPO has intensified efforts towards the realisation of gender equality and the WPS agenda. These efforts range from mainstreaming approaches espoused in the [Policy on Gender-Responsive Peacekeeping Operations](#) to measuring outcomes and impact, coherent with the 2018 A4P with WPS as a political imperative to be integrated into missions' political strategies and systemically integrated in all aspects of peacekeeping. Towards the operationalization of the UN Data Strategy, DPO has incrementally employed data usage for tracking progress and measuring impact, specifically on women's participation with evidence on its catalytic effect in peacekeeping, also acknowledged in the abridged A4P Plus. The Secretary General's Call to Action on Women Transforming Peace and Security targeted at peacekeeping partners in relation to the 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, outlined priority areas of partnerships with women leaders and local women organizations being at the fore front of transformative change. As a board member and signatory of the WPSHA Compact, DPO is committed to accelerating the WPS commitments on women's agency, leadership and meaningful participation while challenging missions, Member States, regional organizations and civil society organizations to implement, monitor and report on progress and document good practices.

**SG's Call to Action - Women Transforming Peace and Security (2020)...women's leadership, and full, equal and meaningful participation as a means of transforming peace and security through:**

- *Prioritizing and investing in community based local women's networks.*
- *Harnessing data and gender analysis for accountable decision making.*
- *Accelerating and leveraging women's mobilization to transform peace and political processes.*
- *Systematizing women's leadership to inform conflict prevention and resolution, mediation and protection; and;*
- *Creating dynamic and innovative partnerships which enhance women's participation.*

## GOOD PRACTICES FROM PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS

This section illustrates select good practices on women's leadership and meaningful participation from the data available in the respective missions. It highlights eight tactics and pathways to women's leadership and meaningful participation in peacekeeping contexts with the documented impact in host communities.

### I. ROBUST GENDER AND WPS LANGUAGE IN MISSION MANDATES

*Integrating WPS as prioritized tasks in a mission mandate is a critical first step in promoting women's leadership and meaningful participation in peacekeeping contexts. Foundationally this provides an entry point for mission initiatives to help overcome barriers to women's meaningful participation in peace and political processes, including in political transitions, conflict prevention, Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Security Sector Reform (SSR) among other thematic areas. However, such mandates are only impactful when complemented with adequate resources to ensure full implementation of mandated tasks.*

## Good practices

In-depth analysis of the evolvement of WPS in missions' mandates shows a trend of moving away from obscure WPS commitments to include more language and prioritized tasks with finer detail on women's leadership and meaningful participation in peace and political processes. There are increased efforts to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes. Although a range of factors drive the implementation of the WPS agenda in peacekeeping, strong WPS language in UN mission mandates is an indispensable starting point. It suffices to note all missions under study have robust WPS language.

### **Proposed steps to successful mandate strengthening include:**

- i. Prioritizing gender, women peace and security as a strategic benchmark.*
- ii. Proposing language early in the Security Council mandating process and facilitating engagement between country experts and WPS experts in member states' permanent missions to increase the likelihood of incorporating WPS language.*
- iii. Tapping on the influential role of the UN Security Council's Informal Experts Group on Women and Peace and Security and WPS champions.*
- iv. Intensified political advocacy and informal consultations to bridge the theory and practice of transformation.*

## II. SYSTEMATISED POLITICAL ADVOCACY

*Political advocacy is the process of supporting and promoting change. For example, efforts seeking to promote or prioritize the WPS agenda including elevating women's leadership and meaningful participation at the local, national or global level. In peacekeeping operations, this has taken various forms such as the use of good offices by mission leadership, political mobilization through targeted stakeholder engagement, communiques to advocate for policy change as well as creation of shared civil spaces between women leaders in all their diversity, mission leaderships, UN country teams and host governments. Examples of systematized political advocacy in CAR, Cyprus and South Sudan illustrate the effect of political advocacy as mechanism for amplifying women's voices, demonstrating their primacy in decision making and provide an avenue to exercise their civic right to participate collectively as change agents in collaboration with local and national leadership.*

## Good practices

In the Central African Republic, MINUSCA supported several initiatives that were instrumental in enhancing women's participation in the electoral process in 2020-2021. Through their local networks and in collaboration with MINUSCA, women successfully lobbied for the integration of the 35 per cent gender quota in the electoral code, in line with the country's gender parity law. Women continued to monitor the political processes to make certain that gender aspects were factored, such as the implementation of the said gender parity law. With support from the mission, they issued a joint communique and engaged politically to call for inclusive and non-violent elections and peace. Additionally, through the Case de Veille (Women's Situation Rooms) Initiative supported by MINUSCA, women identified obstacles to women's participation, collated data on incidents of violence against women including threats of violence targeted at women candidates and coordinated with the mission to generate mitigative measures. The mission in collaboration with UNDP and UN Women also established a 1325 hotline, functioning as a general emergency safety line to report election-related security incidents faced by women, both as candidates and voters for rapid response. These combined efforts



resulted in enhanced protection by the mission and security stakeholders, including de-escalation of situations where women candidates were under threats. The initiatives averted voter apathy and a record 46% of registered voters were women during this period of turmoil. However, limited compliance with the 35 % gender quota by political parties was noted, resulting in only 18 women (up from 8) being elected in the parliament.

In South Sudan, women's organizations have been key partners at the local and national levels in efforts aimed at strengthening political solutions, preventing violence and sustaining peace. Grassroots women's organizations have successfully organized and engaged in reconciliation processes and raised awareness among local communities while pressuring national and international actors to implement the 35% quota in the Revitalized Agreement. The participation of women in the implementation mechanism in the transitional government and in CSO continues to elevate their role in sustaining peace. The launch of South Sudan Women's Leadership Forum (SSWLF) by high-ranking government officials in strategic engagement with other stakeholders such as UN Women, UNDP and Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) on constitution making and electoral process has strengthened women's capacity on the WPS agenda. UNMISS's support and use of good offices to advocate for inclusion and participation of women at all levels of political leadership and peace implementation activities by, inter alia, connecting local women politicians and women leaders with national leaders builds on the momentum to implement the quota provision, particularly in the transitional government and assemblies.



Photo by Maura Ajak, South Sudan.

At the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNFICYP, participated in at least 47 virtual, intercommunal initiatives led by women's CSOs and informal women's groups. The civil society initiatives aimed at inter-communal trust building to embolden Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot women to participate in all stages of the peace process. With ongoing support from UNFICYP, the women's intercommunal civil society platforms mobilized to advocate for a resumption of talks with the inclusion of women alongside other gender considerations. With the support of UNFICYP, the Group of Friends of WPS established in 2021 reiterated their support for greater inclusion of women in the process and work reinforcing stakeholders' commitment through a joint commitment.



### III. MOBILIZATION THROUGH WOMEN'S NETWORKS

*Women's networks have mobilized to promote the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women as voters and candidates in presidential, legislative, and local elections. Numerical representative in electoral processes in areas of voter registration, political party representation and electoral positions are benchmarks for the implementation of the peace agreements in Mali, CAR and South Sudan. Despite the determination of women leaders and their grassroots efforts, the promising practices in these countries have been slow and uneven.*

#### Good practices

In Mali, with MINUSMA's support, local and national networks of women leaders and organizations have mobilized to engage in peace dialogues. For example, MINUSMA supported local and national level women's networks to ensure WPS priorities were incorporated in the outcomes of the Inclusive National Political Dialogue in December 2019. Women also called for their meaningful participation in the 2020 elections, resulting in 41 women out of the 147 members of parliament being elected (27 percent). Following the military coup in August 2020, women leaders actively advocated for peaceful solutions between key political actors and groups and continued to mobilize to influence the transition agenda by producing common white papers and gender-responsive reform proposals. The story of Malian women is one of resilience as their representation from the civilian-led to the military-led transitional government has fluctuated from 23% in 2019 prior to the coup, to 16% in June 2020, and 21% in 2021. The innovation of MINUSMA's approach is its unifying aspect. Each project brings together a diverse group of women, from the Peace Agreement Monitoring Committee, the Transitional Assembly, the Government, as well as from the civil society and communities to take joint actions to strengthen women's participation in the peace and political process in Mali.

Photo by Marco Domino UN/MINUSMA





In CAR, MINUSCA supported women to mobilize through a ‘Walk for Peace’ to mark the Human Rights Day in 2020. This was a peaceful march through the capital in Bangui co-organised by women CSO organisations and coinciding with the last day of “16 days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence” annual campaigns. It brought together women from all walks of life to demand for an inclusive, peaceful and violence-free elections, reinforcing the MINUSCA mandate requirement on creating an enabling environment. This sustained advocacy by women’s networks extended to inter-community dialogues to promote social cohesion and peace throughout the CAR, including in areas particularly affected by violence and communal tensions alongside parallel campaigns demanding accountability for conflict-related sexual violence in the country. The key lesson from the CAR is that mobilisation and advocacy should not be limited to a one-off activity or event, but a sustained movement through different platforms to influence a wide array of decision makers in multiple communities.

#### IV. INSTITUTIONALIZED MONITORING MECHANISMS AND QUOTAS IN PEACE AGREEMENTS

*Beyond their participation in peace and political processes as negotiators and or signatories to peace agreements, women’s meaningful participation within the implementation and monitoring mechanisms established by peace agreements is essential. This increases the likelihood that peace processes will be sustainable through their constituents and broadly supported within the community. Not only does this process tap into the expertise and experience of women’s diverse networks, but also fosters local ownership and legitimization of ongoing processes. This requires institutionalizing the women, peace and security agenda through systemic integration throughout the process.*

*Overcoming resistance to inclusive talks and women’s meaningful participation, however, still requires a gender-responsive leadership that is accountable and creative, given the peculiarities per country and context. One way of enhancing women’s political representation in the post-agreement transition phase and ensuring women’s voices are heard throughout peace processes is through quotas and special temporary measures in line with the [Secretary General’s Call to Action on Human Rights](#). These measures send a powerful and important signal to political decision-makers, women and the wider community by implicitly undermining patriarchal norms. If implemented, the result is an expanded space for women to engage and substantively contribute among traditional political elites and decision-making bodies in the post-settlement phase; an essential step toward sustainable peace particularly during implementation phases of peace processes when women and their constituents continue to organize to ensure that commitments are upheld.*

##### Good practices

In Mali, women’s sustained advocacy efforts resulted in the passing of a gender parity law in 2015 that established a 30 percent gender quota in elected and appointed positions. Despite this, women have been absent from the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreement signed in 2015. The Mali Women Leaders’ Platform, supported by MINUSMA, has engaged to expand these spaces for women by anchoring their lobby efforts in the gender parity law. Following their dedicated efforts, and the holding of a high-level workshop with the Government and parties to the conflict on women’s participation as mandated by the Security Council in 2019, the representation of women in the Peace Agreement Monitoring Committee (Comite de suivi de l’Accord (CSA) finally increased from 3 to 31 per cent in 2020. Commitments have been made to include 15 additional women to the monitoring mechanisms (3 in the CSA and 12 in the four thematic subcommittees). Direct financial contributions to women’s participation by international actors was critical to achieve this.

A coordination framework has been established and is co-chaired by the Ministry of Gender and MINUSMA to follow up on the recommendations from the high-level workshop and establish an independent Observatory to monitor and enhance the participation of women in peace and political processes. Since 2019, strengthening women's participation in the peace process has been integrated in the mandate of MINUSMA as a critical benchmark for the peace process. This has helped overcome institutional barriers to women's participation.

In CAR, a modest increase in women's representation in the formal implementation and monitoring mechanisms has been noted following women's active participation in the negotiation of the Political Agreement in 2019. Although falling short of the 35% gender quota as per the country's gender parity law, women made up 23% of the members of the Local Peace and Reconciliation Committees in 2019, while 17% of the members in the mechanisms at the national level were women. By June 2021, the number at local level had increased to 30%, while at national level it remained the same. In 2019, the National committees on DDR and SSR included 23% women, which is notable given the historic challenges to women's participation in security arrangements. MINUSCA activities have preceded significant gains, such as the achievement of a 25% rate of women employed within the national police and gendarmerie in 2019.

In South Sudan, following the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), the peace process has been making progress albeit slow paced, with limited participation of women. Only two of the monitoring and implementation mechanisms meet the 45% quota indicated in the Agreement. Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (CTSAMV) has a composition of 41% women while the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC) remains at 35% of women representation. As of October 2021, the average representation of women in the implementation mechanism is 15%. Although numerically limited, women in these mechanisms have continued to play oversight roles. The trend of women's representation has further extended to transitional institutions in the government, assemblies as well as political parties. Following the reconstitution of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly (R-TNLA), the average representation of women in the political parties represented in the assembly was at 32.36% with some parties doing better than others [5]. This progress is important for the Constitutional review and preparations for the electoral process. With support from UNMISS in collaboration with UNDP and UN women, multiple measures and synergies have been pulled together to facilitate and build up the political space and enhance the capacity of South Sudanese women to be an instructive part of the state building process.



5. Political party representation 32% (SPLM), 35% (SPLM IO), 21% (SSOA), 23% (FD) and 25% (OPP) for a total of 550 appointed as of October 2021



## V. COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

*Dynamic partnerships are critical in building synergies among Member States, regional organizations, UN entities, host nations, CSOs and grassroots women networks, ensuring complementarity and drawing on comparative advantages. The UN and regional organisations play a critical role in facilitating access for women, women's organizations and women's networks to national and international decision-making arenas. In this vein, strategic partnerships with local women leaders and networks are significant as a means of ensuring that the ownership of political processes is anchored within community processes.*

### Good Practices

MINUSCA, European Union Training Mission (EUTM) and other UN entities have collaborated on supporting a gender responsive SSR process in CAR. Collaboration between European Union (EU) missions, MINUSCA and other UN agencies amplified efforts to increase the participation of women in the security sector and ensure a gender responsive approach to the SSR in CAR. Coordinated assistance and training by MINUSCA's SSR Unit and various international partners streamlined several initiatives, benefitting both the armed forces and the gendarmerie. In support of the implementation of the Political Agreement in CAR, a joint peace analysis with an integrated gender perspective was conducted jointly by the UN, EU and the African Union.

In Lebanon, UNIFIL's support to the Government of Lebanon in the development of Lebanon's first National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security 2019, was critical to the realization of the WPS agenda in Lebanon. These processes expanded the political space for Lebanese women's organizations to meaningfully collaborate with the government.

Engagement by leadership across missions has paved way for women's participation and learning through interactive sessions. The commitment of UN leadership including missions to women's agency is exemplified through their use of good offices for political advocacy with host governments and strategic engagement with women leaders from mission settings, such as CAR, Mali, Darfur and Cyprus via high-level and round table discussions including with the UN Secretary General on the 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 in October 2020.

Across the board peacekeeping stakeholders including member states, women led organisations, academia and missions tapped into the invaluable resource of women leaders' lived experiences. These shared political spaces are fora for peer and cross-mission learning on approaches to overcoming limitations on women's participation in ongoing political and transitional processes. These reference points translate theory into practice based on the five priority areas in the SG's Call to Action on WPS. Additionally, in 2019 DPO organized a forum for women leaders engaged in the DDR and SSR processes, including women ex-combatants, women in security forces and practitioners from Mali, CAR as well as Colombia. This resulted in a set of strategic outcome recommendations on women's participation in this area and gender integration drawn from their diverse and unique experiences in DDR and SSR processes. These have since been documented into knowledge products for reference by other missions and leadership during planning and decision-making on SSR and DDR [6].

## VI. DATA COLLECTION AND GENDER ANALYSIS

*Measuring the overall impact of initiatives on gender equality and WPS is dependent on systemic collection of quantitative and qualitative data for tracking and monitoring progress at strategic and operational aspects, including in the host nation. Ensuring WPS data and gender analysis inform planning processes, strategies and reporting is critical in accelerating the implementation of WPS mandates, and achieving sustainable peace outcomes. Despite the*





UNIFIL's Electronic Data system, known as the Tracking Engagement Community (TEC), is an example of a data driven gender-sensitive reporting system. The TEC is a database, created in collaboration with UNIFIL's Outreach Unit, to collate, monitor and evaluate its programs and contributions to activities that seek to empower women and girls. It also allows other mission units to work directly with communities and to coordinate actions in real time, thus improving communication between various mission components, avoiding duplication, and ensuring that gender is integrated across all mission activities. This system enables the consistent collection and utilization of gender-disaggregated data and gender analysis in its planning and reporting processes and highlights the participation of women in UNIFIL's programs, both as beneficiaries and decision makers. TEC enhanced reporting and data collection concerning women's and girl's participation in several UNIFIL initiatives, including in mixed patrols and checkpoints outreach and related community initiatives.

In Mali, MINUSMA and UN Women in 2020-2021 conducted a comprehensive gender-responsive conflict analysis of the peace process which identified and discussed drivers of conflict from a gender perspective, including looking at the roles of women and men in relation to the drivers. Women's participation and the integration of gender in the peace process, politics and in the security sector was analysed, as well as the impact of Covid-19 on women's participation and rights. The analysis, currently in final drafting stage, will identify WPS priorities, and uncovered opportunities to address gender specific conflict triggers and peace drivers, to be considered in MINUSMA's support to the on-going political transition in Mali, as well as in the UN transitions planning process. The draft will be presented to the UN Country Team in 2022.

## VII. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION



*Strategic communication has been a crucial strategy to strengthen women's leadership and participation. Through this approach, women's voices, leadership and efforts are amplified to shape policy and practice. DPO has continuously created strategic opportunities for women to influence peacekeeping, including by Senior Leadership. High-level events, comprehensive multimedia campaigns, as well as open day campaigns on WPS have been effective channels of communicating and elevating the roles and contributions of women to peace and security.*

## Good Practices

Gender Units and Strategic Communications and Public information offices, both at Headquarters and in missions in focus, have through joint initiatives invested in WPS communications resulting in innovative campaigns. A WPS communications strategy was drafted in 2019, followed by a planning workshop for missions in 2020. This led to enhanced collaboration and prioritization of WPS communications. As a result, comprehensive multimedia campaigns, with digital products/campaigns, media outreach, visual annual reports, and photo exhibitions have been implemented as effective tools in advocating for women's participation, including by Senior Leadership.

In the CAR, communications strategies have rendered effective, country-specific ways of mobilizing women's participation in electoral and peace processes, and in decision-making and governance processes. As outlined in MINUSCA's Communication Plan, the mission used diverse approaches during elections to mobilise women to register as voters and vie for elective office. Given the CAR's wide radio coverage and low literacy rates among women, the use of radio was acutely impactful in accessing a diverse group of women. In partnership with various women's organizations and youth networks, UN Women, MINUSCA and UNDP supported outreach campaigns via radio, mobile caravans and bi-monthly meetings for update during the voter registration as part of country-wide public awareness campaigns.

In Cyprus, UNFICYP developed a month-long social media campaign in March 2021 as part of a global campaign on women's participation in peace and political processes. The campaign highlighted two women activists from Cyprus building trust and promoting peace dialogue among women from the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities.

## VIII. INNOVATIVE APPROACHES AND CREATIVITY

*Exclusion of women from leadership roles often stems from longstanding patriarchal perceptions and norms and unfounded stereotypes of women's limited competence and experience of leadership in government positions. Even with legal provisions such as quotas to advocate for the consideration of women in key leadership positions, progress is minimal. To overcome these exclusive attitudes and false narratives, select approaches have been considered.*



Photo by Leila Thiam, CAR.



## Good practices

In South Sudan, with the support of UNMISS, a “Ready for Power” Directory was created to fast-track women’s participation in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). This directory covered 10 regions (at state level) and includes competent women leaders to be considered for appointment for transitional decision-making positions. The objective was to mitigate gender stereotypes and narratives that undermine women ascent to public offices on account of inadequate capacity and competence. The process encouraged the participation of women from faith-based organizations, CSOs and traditional leaders to provide opportunity for a broad cross-section of women and to hone their leadership skills. As of mid-2021, a first volume of the “Ready for Power” Directories had been completed in seven out of ten states. The directories will continue to be developed and updated during the transition period, and ahead of the first election in South Sudan with a long-term objective of accelerating the implementation and realisation of the 35% quota for women at all levels of governance.

In CAR, MINUSCA’s Compendium of Competencies created by the mission’s SSR and Gender Units supported the development of a Compendium of Competencies for Women in the national security sector. Aimed to promote the advancement of women in the security sector, the compendium is expected to play a key role to integrating gender in the SSR. A consolidated compendium was created for all services, as well as one specific to each branch of the security sector in CAR. An official launch of this initiative was held on 11 March 2020, as part of the International Women’s Day celebration.



Photo by Leila Thiam, CAR.

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Key Takeaways

The collective agency of women's leadership and meaningful participation is essential to transformation and sustainable change given their shared levels of responsibility and accountability.

Dismantling patriarchal structures calls for a paradigm shift where power, access, responsibility and accountability for resources, decision making, challenges and success are shared across the board.

There are several pathways to women's leadership and meaningful participation in peacekeeping context. From theory to practice:

- Strategies to enhance women's leadership should be comprehensive and holistic, and encompass women's participation in peace, electoral and other political processes, as well as women's leadership in local and national bodies.
- Leadership and accountability entails creating spaces for others including women in their diversity as peacebuilders, ex combatants, rights defenders, activists as local women leaders and in their capacity grassroots communities.
- Strong partnerships and collaboration with regional bodies such as the AU has a catalytic effect in influencing women's increased participation in transitional and national peace processes.
- High-level political advocacy is an effective tool to open up space for grass roots women, women leaders, women peacebuilders and their networks to engage in peace and political processes meaningfully.
- Awareness raising, strategic communications and engagement with local women's organisations elevates women's voices, influences decision making and inspires others to engage constructively in peace and political processes and other aspects of peacekeeping.
- The impact of women's leadership and meaningful participation can only be determined by systematised use of data including shared insights of women themselves.
- More efforts are needed to systematically translate strategic gains from informal processes and local processes to formal, national political processes.

The following recommendations are put forth to peacekeeping stakeholders.

## *UN Security Council should:*

- Systematically call for women's meaningful participation in peace processes, taking into consideration the diverse roles women play, as a priority task in mission mandates, as well as the integration of gender and WPS across the mandate implementation and request for regular analytical reporting on progress in Secretary General Reports and briefings from mission leadership.
- Consistently issue specific instructions and mandates to integrate a gender perspective into security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes and call for women's participation in these processes.
- Place greater emphasis on harnessing data and supporting gender-responsive conflict analysis and research on women's participation for informed, evidence-based policymaking.
- Regularize meetings with women leaders and local women's organizations, including during the Council's visits to peacekeeping missions, and invite women to brief the Council and amplify their political messaging and priorities in Council statements, mission mandates, and other resolutions.

## *Member States and host governments should:*

- Implement quotas and other structural reforms that institutionalize space for women's participation. This is a step toward validating the importance of women's meaningful engagement in legislative assemblies, ministerial positions, local councils and committees.



- Allocate resources for the logistical needs of women leaders and their grassroots networks to participate in ongoing local and national peace and reconciliation efforts. This includes allocating resources to ably monitor the implementation of peace agreements.
- Allocate resources towards data collection, gender analysis and research on women's participation to support evidence-based initiatives that inform policy and accountable decision-making.
- Create a protective environment for women participation through the enactment of relevant laws, enforcement, physical security measures for prevention and protection from all forms of threats and enhance overall accountability on this front.
- Use the intersectional and intergenerational lens to address systemic discrimination, gender inequalities and women's exclusion from decision making.
- Systematize women's leadership and meaningful participation in their diversity as peace builders, human rights defenders, ex-combatants and citizens in their communities through numeric representation as well as substantive engagement in all stages of peace processes.

#### ***United Nations Peacekeeping missions should:***

- Prioritize and invest in gender analysis in all aspects of mission assessment for enhanced responsive approaches to planning, budgeting and implementation that accounts for the unique roles, needs and interests of men and women.
- Undertake a comprehensive approach to strengthen partnerships and networks, innovative approaches to resource mobilization, capacity building, mentorships to bridge existing gender gaps on women's leadership and meaningful participation.
- Through good offices intensify advocacy for women's leadership and meaningful participation of women leaders, local grassroots networks and local women networks in peace and political processes including transitions through quota, temporary special measures and other credible means.
- Allocate personnel and programmatic funding for gender units to support initiatives aimed at advancing the WPS agenda and implementation of the mission mandate in collaboration with host communities.
- Support the establishment of an inclusive and protective environment to ensure women leaders can participate meaningfully in peace and political processes at all levels without harassment, intimidation or violence.
- Use quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to monitor trends, measure impact, mobilize funding, and advocate for a greater quality and quantity of space for women's constructive engagement.
- Allocate funding for technical expertise, capability and training on data analytics, monitoring and evaluation to bridge existing capacity gaps on data collection, reporting and analysis towards the operationalization of WPS in the UN system wide accountability framework and UN data strategy.

#### ***Civil society organizations, research institutions and women's organizations should:***

- Leverage and build on successful women-led initiatives (including those perceived as informal) in decision making at all levels and identify innovative ways to break systematized structural barriers and patriarchal norms.
- Prioritize their oversight role in host countries to adhere to their commitments on quotas and related provisions. This can be done by providing technical and financial support to women leaders for their substantive engagement and articulation of issues in associated processes.
- Conduct research and document how increased and meaningful participation of women in leadership affects local perceptions of women as leaders and affects outcomes of other policies in sustaining peace.

- Consistently advocate for women's full participation in all aspects of peace and political processes including their engagement with conflict prevention in host nations.
- Tap into and invest in innovative partnerships with women regarding informal and formal processes at local and national levels to elevate their voices, diversify representation in analysis, planning, implementation and overall decision making and bridge the generation gap.



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