

Trends and Recommendations

This policy brief outlines the findings from the [NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security's \(NGOWG\)](#) monitoring and analysis of the UN Security Council's daily work over the course of 2015.¹ The recommendations build on our well-established policy guidance project, the [Monthly Action Points \(MAP\) on Women Peace and Security](#), and broader advocacy during 2015.²

Despite the rhetoric and repeated commitments, the women, peace and security agenda is far from being comprehensively implemented in policy and practice by Member States and the UN system. The commitments on paper do not match practice: from poorly planned provision of services in conflict-affected situations, to impunity for acts of sexual exploitation and abuse, to lack of support for civil society participation in peace processes; there continues to be a disconnected, fragmented and siloed approach to women, peace and security implementation in the Security Council.

Our findings reinforce the outcomes from the three, high-level independent peace and security reviews undertaken in 2015 on peace operations; women, peace and security; and the peacebuilding architecture.¹ These three reviews called for the full integration of the women, peace and security agenda across all peace and security decision-making processes, and further underscored the need to ensure coherence between various policy processes. This echoes the statements made during the UN Security Council open debate on women, peace and security, held in October 2015 in recognition of the 15th anniversary of the adoption of Resolution 1325 (2000), during which speakers reinforced the importance of implementing existing women, peace and security norms in a holistic manner which includes robust financing, support for civil society and adequate capacity for implementation.

Background

In 2015, the international community marked the 15th anniversary of the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on "Women and peace and security." Resolution 1325 (2000) along with subsequent resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), and 2242 (2015) encompass the "Women, Peace and Security" (WPS) policy framework, often referred to as the "WPS agenda." The WPS agenda recognizes that conflict has gendered impacts, that it affects women and men differently, and that women have critical roles to play in peace and security processes and institutions. It calls for the **participation of women** at all levels of decision-making in conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts; **protection and promotion of women's rights**, including prevention and protection of all victims/survivors of sexual and gender-based violence; and adoption of **gender perspectives** in conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding and other processes. Taken holistically, this agenda recognizes that a non-gendered understanding of conflict significantly undermines international peace and security efforts. Women, peace and security is, therefore, not only a principle but a call to action for Member States, the Security Council and the UN system.

TRENDS

The eight resolutions on women, peace and security over the last 15 years serves as a strong foundation for the operationalization of the women, peace and security agenda by the UN system and Member States, resulting in, at a rhetorical level, an acknowledgment of these issues as important. However, our analysis of the work of the UN Security Council over the past year reveals that many, if not most, of the challenges and ongoing gaps in implementation by the Council itself remain unchanged from previous years³:

¹ The NGOWG is a coalition of 15 organizations that collectively advocate for the equal and full participation of women in all efforts to create and maintain international peace and security. For more information, please see our [website](#).

² The MAP is a two-page briefing note that provides analysis and advocacy entry points on country situations and thematic issues on the Security Council's agenda for the forthcoming month. These briefs are designed for Security Council Members, civil society actors, Member States, and UN entities, and are for wide distribution. For more information, please see our [website](#).

³ The NGOWG monitors and analyzes the language in the regular work of the UN Security Council on both thematic and country-specific agenda items, with a focus on WPS-related issues. We focus on assessing the *frequency*, *content*, and *quality* of references in resolutions, presidential statements and reports of the Secretary-General, measuring against the commitments contained in the Security Council's resolutions on WPS, as well as various guidelines for UN system implementation.

- **It is clear that the Security Council fails to concretely, on a consistent basis, recognize and support women’s participation and empowerment as fundamental to achieving holistic peace and security.** There continues to be a more acute focus on issues related to women’s protection and promotion of women’s rights. This focus, however, fails to connect and acknowledge the mutually reinforcing nature of women’s participation and protection, thus creating a false dichotomy that claims women’s protection issues are more important than, and separate from, issues related to women’s participation.⁴ Immediate protection needs must be met in conjunction with a long-term, transformation, led by women and men, of the structures which led to the situation of insecurity. Women’s empowerment, coupled with the protection and promotion of women’s rights, reduces vulnerability and insecurity and will enhance women’s ability to protect themselves and their rights. Further, women’s participation in protection mechanisms will ensure women are driving decisions made regarding protection. This failure to address the women, peace and security agenda in a holistic manner is evident across the entire work of the Council.
- **The flow of WPS-related information to the UN Security Council is often absent or superficial, resulting in incomplete and insufficient understanding of the gender dimensions of the conflict and broader conflict dynamics.** A range of stakeholders provides information and analysis to the UN Security Council, including the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), expert groups associated with sanctions regimes, and senior UN leaders. Information and analysis on WPS is sporadic in both written, and verbal form is sporadic and often seems to be the result of a confluence of positive factors, rather than a structured process. When gender analysis is included, it is often in the context of a broader, strategic planning regarding mission priorities. Gender analysis should go beyond the bare minimum of sex and age disaggregation of data and look at the general rights and concerns of women and girls. Gender analysis should also: take into account the differentiated needs, power relations, or vulnerability of different women and girls based, for example, on age, location, class or (dis-) abilities; examine critically the role played by masculinities, as well as particular needs of men and boys; and consider potential vulnerabilities of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and/or intersex (LGBTI) individuals and communities.
- **The degree to which women, peace and security-related issues are incorporated and considered differs greatly depending on which conflict or crisis is being discussed, suggesting the international, regional and local politics surrounding a particular situation directly influences whether gender is taken as a core component by which to assess a situation.** The politicization of the women, peace and security agenda in the context of Council decision-making results in gender not being considered across all situations when in fact every situation has gender dimensions which need to be identified and addressed. Addressing the gender dimensions of peace and security issues require considering the way in which women, men, girls, boys and those not identifying with the gender binary are both involved in and impacted by the situation – at every stage, in every process. The Council’s adoption of a siloed and ad-hoc approach is, in part, due to a lack of conceptual clarity on issues related to gender.⁵
- **Engagement with civil society by the UN Security Council and Member States at UN Headquarters is improving but is far from systematic.** There have been promising signs that informal engagement is increasing, but civil society representatives have yet to be invited to brief the Security Council during any formal, country-specific briefing. Regular engagement and consultation at the country-level continues to be ad-hoc and inaccessible for many local civil society organizations. Civil society consultation is fundamental to the success of any peace and security decision-making process.

Peace Operations

In 2015, there were very few changes to the mandates for peace operation⁶ in relation to women, peace and security. Currently, **11 of 27 peace operations** have women, peace and security-related tasks as part of their mandates: **8 of 16 (50%)**

Our methodology is applied rigorously in order to accurately assess gaps in implementation and provide insight into the priorities of the Council, dominant discourse on peace and security issues, and conceptual understanding of the WPS agenda.

⁴ In the context of the UN Security Council, “protection” efforts encompass a range of activities, including physically protecting civilians; preventing sexual and gender-based violence; monitoring and documenting violations of human rights; support for legal reform at the national level to protect and promote human rights, including women’s rights; and decision-making regarding structures of displacement camps.

⁵ One of the biggest critiques of the way in which the WPS agenda is discussed by institutional and government stakeholders is the conflation of the terms “gender” and “women.” This interchangeable use results in a sole focus on women, and a lack of attention to or understanding of the role that gender, including masculinities, plays in shaping the dynamics of conflict. For example, the terms “gender concerns,” “gender considerations,” “gender issues,” “gender-related issues,” “gender-sensitive,” “gender implications,” and “gender dimensions” are all used somewhat interchangeably. Perhaps the differences are minimal, but this inconsistency on a superficial level, only exemplifies the deeper, substantive issues.

⁶ The term “peace operations” encompasses both peacekeeping operations (managed by the Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)) and political / peacebuilding missions (managed by the Department of Political Affairs (DPA)).

peacekeeping operations and 4 of 11 (36%) special political / peacebuilding missions.⁷ Further, only 5 peacekeeping missions are mandated to address gender as a **cross-cutting component**: Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Haiti (MINUSTAH), Mali (MINUSMA) and South Sudan (UNMISS), despite the Council's stated intention to ensure gender is better addressed within missions.⁸ The most notable changes, both positive and negative, to mandates over the course of 2015, include:

- In the mandate for the mission in South Sudan ([S/RES/2241 \(2015\)](#)), the Council included a provision calling for gender to be mainstreamed as a cross-cutting issue across the work of the mission..
- In the mandate for the mission in Guinea-Bissau ([S/RES/2203 \(2015\)](#)), the Council added new language calling on the UN to support the implementation of Guinea-Bissau's national action plan (NAP) on women, peace and security through the appointment of gender advisors.
- The mandate for the mission in Libya ([S/RES/2238 \(2015\)](#)) was, unfortunately, stripped of all WPS-related provisions as part of the reconfiguration of the mission's mandate in response to the withdrawal of most mission personnel to Tunisia. The removal of this language is troubling as it is precisely during moments of increased insecurity and instability when ensuring WPS-related issues are addressed is most important.

The *frequency* of references to WPS increased from 2014 to 2015. However the *content* of the references overall continued to focus more predominantly on one portion of the WPS agenda, with more than **80% of all WPS-related language focused on violations of women's rights, including sexual and gender-based violence**. Language in resolutions on issues related to protection tends to have more detail and be more explicit regarding particular actions UN peacekeepers and the broader UN system should take for protection-related provisions.

Crisis Response

The Security Council's response to threats to peace and security encompasses actions beyond deployment of peace operations. In some situations, the Council will adopt a resolution or a presidential statement to address emerging / recurring violence (e.g. the ongoing violence in Burundi or calling for a peace process in Yemen) or one particular aspect of the situation in question which doesn't fall under the purview of an existing peace operation (e.g. piracy off the coast of Somalia or developing a better response to the illicit drug trade in Afghanistan). The Security Council has historically been weak in addressing women, peace and security in the context of crisis situation, and in 2015, the Council continued to be uneven. In decisions adopted on 10 country situations, the Security Council **addressed WPS in only 39% of all relevant decisions**.⁹

In terms of the *frequency* of references, there has been a negative downward trend in the Council's attention to women, peace and security in the context of its country-specific presidential statements: **58% of all presidential statements addressed women, peace and security in 2011 to 40% in 2014**. For country situations where there is an existing peacekeeping or political mission, with a strong mandate for women, peace and security, such as South Sudan and DRC, the Security Council often failed to even minimally reference women, peace and security issues in crisis situations.

Sanctions

Currently, **8 of 16 (50%) sanctions regimes** include violations of international human rights and humanitarian law as designation criteria, with **4 (25%) regimes** explicitly including acts involving sexual violence or violations of international law targeting women as designation criteria: CAR, DRC, Somalia, and South Sudan.¹⁰ In 2015, at least 12 individuals and 1 entity across 4 sanctions regimes were listed for sexual violence or targeting women for violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

In 2015, 16 reports from expert groups associated with sanctions regimes were submitted to the Security Council, **11 (69%)** of which provided details regarding human rights violations targeting women, sexual and gender-based violence or the role of women in armed groups.¹¹ The women, peace and security-related information in reports primarily focused on detailing patterns, as well as specific instances, of sexual and gender-based violence. In some reports, there is contextual sex and age disaggregated data provided, however rarely there is acknowledgment and information regarding women's role as active

⁷ DPKO missions which are mandated to address women, peace and security are: CAR (MINUSCA), Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), Darfur (UNAMID), DRC (MONUSCO), Haiti (MINUSTAH), Liberia (UNMIL), Mali (MINUSMA) and South Sudan (UNMISS). DPA missions which are mandated to address women, peace and security are: Afghanistan (UNAMA), Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), Somalia (UNSOM), and West Africa (UNOWA).

⁸ Women, peace and security is one of several thematic issues that is considered to be "cross-cutting," which means that all functional units within a peace operation should prioritize women, peace and security, and the responsibility to implement does not solely rest with the gender advisor and gender team.

⁹ The Security Council adopted decisions on the situation in Burundi, CAR, Central African region, DRC, Lebanon, Mali, Sahel, South Sudan, Syria, and Yemen.

¹⁰ Sanctions regimes which have human rights-related designation criteria: Côte d'Ivoire, Libya, Darfur, Yemen, CAR, DRC, Somalia, and South Sudan.

¹¹ Reports from associated expert groups with related references: Côte d'Ivoire; CAR; DRC; Darfur; South Sudan; Somalia; Yemen; and Al-Qaeda.

participants in armed groups. Notably, the committee responsible for overseeing the South Sudan sanctions noted in their annual report that the committee met with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual violence in conflict.

Thematic

In 2015, **77% of all decisions adopted on thematic agenda** items included women, peace and security-specific language.¹² The only decisions that did not include women, peace and security, were those focused on terrorism. Notably, this is the first time that there has been coherence between both presidential statements and resolutions adopted on peacekeeping. All reports of the Secretary-General on thematic issues included references to women, peace and security issues, and several of these reports contained strong analysis and case studies that serve as good practice examples of gender analysis, including those submitted on small arms and light weapons and conflict prevention.

Reports of the Secretary-General

Overall, **75% of all reports of the Secretary-General** on country-specific situations contain women, peace and security-related references, which is a slight increase when compared to previous years. The majority of references in reports of the Secretary-General are superficial and highly descriptive. Most of these references are contained in paragraphs summarizing activities of the mission. Common characteristics of references include lists of general challenges; among them might be gender inequality or discrimination, or women's rights. There was also frequent listing of instances of violations of women's rights; often grouped in paragraphs recounting other violations of human rights, including those against children.

More than **70% of all reports had sex and age disaggregated data**, primarily in the context of civilians targeted for violence and civilian deaths. Data was also increasingly provided in terms of the sex of candidates, voters, political office holders and the personnel in the mission and military.

References most frequently occurred in the portion of the report detailing activities related to the implementation of a specific peacekeeping or political mission mandate, however, often there is not corresponding information in either the portion of the report detailing recent developments or in the observation and recommendations section, where the Security Council gets its actionable points.¹³ As such, gender, and addressing women's concerns more specifically, is left out of this most important part of the reports reaching the Security Council: **20% of all reports addressed WPS in the background / context section, and 50% of all reports included WPS-related recommendations or observations.** This is a slight improvement over 2014.

Although the *frequency* of references slightly increased, the *quality* did not improve. There still is an overall lack of analysis regarding deeper, structural causes, as well as, in the majority of cases, a failure to identify the ways in which women are participating in protection efforts. Some factors which we observed having potential influence on the *quality* of WPS-related information, includes:

- **Report Type:** Although regular reports often lack gender analysis, special reports which assess or review the mandate of a mission as part of the establishment, reconfiguration, or drawdown of a mission contain much stronger analysis. All 3 reports reviewing of the mandates for the missions in Libya (UNSMIL), Darfur (UNAMID), and South Sudan (UNMISS) contained strong gender analysis. The report on the special assessment of the mandate for South Sudan ([S/2015/899](#)), for example, succeeds in incorporating a gender lens into the conflict analysis as well as the review of almost all mandate components of UNMISS, which is further reflected in the recommendations for future mandate adjustments.
- **Mandate:** Our analysis revealed that having a mandate to address women, peace and security correlates with the almost universal inclusion of some sort of information on women, peace and security. The quality of the information provided on women, peace and security, including the provision of analysis, improved for missions that have both a cross-cutting mandate and adequate gender expertise.
- **Gender Advisor:** Our analysis demonstrates that having a mandate for WPS will ensure that WPS is included in reporting. However, mandates merely determine quantity of reporting; it is the presence of a gender advisor and/or women's protection advisors (WPA) that strengthen the quality. Further, there is a correlative relationship not only between better analysis and gender expertise in missions but between gender advisors and the inclusion of references specifically on participation. WPAs, on the other hand, have an influence on protection-focused references; the rate of

¹² Decisions were adopted on the following thematic issues: Children and armed conflict; protection of civilians; small arms and light weapons; women, peace and security; youth, peace and security; peacekeeping; peacebuilding; terrorism and counterterrorism; and threats to international peace and security.

¹³ The location of references can be one indicator of the way in which gender is mainstreamed throughout the work of a mission. The typical structure of reports of the Secretary-General is: (I) Introduction; (II) Context and recent political and/or security developments; (III) Activities related to the implementation of the mandate, often broken up by functional area of the mandate; and (IV) Observations and recommendations.

increase in references to protection issues aligns with the deployment of WPAs beginning in 2012. Countries with more balanced reporting (such as Somalia and South Sudan) often have both gender advisors and WPAs.

Recommendations

For the women, peace and security agenda to be fully realized, the commitments in past resolutions, and the cumulative recommendations in all peace and security reviews need to be implemented. Member States, including Security Council members, must move beyond statements at the annual Security Council open debate and take concrete action to support women's civil society advocates in calling for consistently strong women, peace and security mandates and resolutions across all geographic, conflict and crisis areas; accountability by UN leadership both at headquarters and across all missions; women's meaningful participation in all peace and political processes; the availability and deployment of gender expertise in every setting; and the incorporation of gender analysis into every country report.

The Council should be actively engaging the women, peace and security agenda within the full scope of its work including by implementing [resolutions 2122 \(2013\)](#) and [2242 \(2015\)](#). In particular, the newly established Informal Expert Group should be structured to improve the flow of women, peace and security information and analysis into the Council and be a mechanism by which to strengthen accountability of mission leadership. The commitment in [Resolution 2242 \(2015\)](#) to invite civil society, including women's organizations, to participate in country-specific considerations should be upheld. Further, there must be a concerted effort to take forward the provision in [Resolution 2242 \(2015\)](#) on engagement by men and boys as partners in a meaningful, transformative and critical way to promote gender equality and reduce violence.

The Council should also ensure that mandates and presidential statements include specific language on gender in both the protection and participation elements of its work, and that the Council is leveraging all of the tools in its "toolkit," including Commissions of Inquiry, sanctions, and cooperation with regional organizations, to not only support women's meaningful participation in all levels of decision-making, and their protection concerns in conflict, but also to support women's roles in conflict prevention:

Peacekeeping and Political Missions

Where possible, mandates should call for missions to provide capacity-building in order to support the establishment of gender-sensitive institutions and legislation, mechanisms to enable women's participation, and foster women's civil society organizations; this should be accompanied by logistical, technical and financial support.

- **Gender Expertise:** In order to ensure the women, peace and security agenda is fully implemented at the field level, missions must have sufficient gender expertise, authority, and capacity at a senior level. In this regard, parallel negotiations regarding budgets taking place in General Assembly Fifth Committee must be complementary and maintain and expand the capacity of missions to consider women, peace and security as a cross-cutting issue, as called for in Security Council resolutions. Gender expertise is a fundamental necessity and should not be considered optional within peacekeeping and political missions.
- **Mission Drawdown:** As peace operations drawdown and transfer authority to a UN country team (UNCT), the Council should ensure that both the Government and UN entities continue efforts to support the full and equal participation of women in political, economic and social spheres. It is vital in this regard that women continue to receive political and financial resources to ensure their meaningful engagement in their countries' futures and prevent relapse into conflict. The Council should send a strong message that the gains for women must be consolidated in the transition to the UNCT and that Member States must support this consolidation, including financially.

Sanctions

Ensure designation criteria and terms of reference for associated expert groups and sanctions committees contain specific provisions regarding gender considerations and a requirement for frequent and ongoing collaboration with civil society organizations in the field as part of information gathering. Reports of associated expert groups should contain gender analysis throughout.

Information

Information provided to the UN Security Council in the form of reports by the UN Secretary-General and briefings from senior level officials must better reflect the reality of women's rights and the full scope of the women, peace and security agenda:

- **Briefings:** During the consideration of reports of the Secretary-General, peacekeeping and political mission leadership should brief the Council on the specific gendered dimensions of the situation being considered and the strategies being implemented to address these. Council members should ensure that women, peace and security issues are adequately covered by asking context specific questions of the briefers.
- **Analysis:** Reports of the Secretary-General should contain an analysis of and barriers to implementation, not just general information and lists of activities. Training should be provided to all missions on how to conduct adequate gender analysis that goes beyond tokenistic references and quantifying the number of women and actually engages with gendered power dynamics, needs and vulnerabilities.
- **Observations & Recommendations:** Reports of the Secretary-General should, further, include concrete recommendations on ways to improve implementation of the women, peace and security agenda across the work of the missions and reflect the strengthened gender analysis.
- **Benchmarks:** Gender should be a cross-cutting issue in all benchmarks. Reporting on benchmarks should include gender analysis on trends and the situation for women, men, girls, boys and all those not identifying with the gender binary, in addition to taking into account the protection and promotion of women's rights and support for women's full participation as prerequisites to the achievement of the benchmarks.
- **Sex and age disaggregated data:** Reports of the Secretary-General should contain sex and age disaggregated data, including from the global indicators on women, peace and security and peace consolidation benchmarks. It is crucial to emphasize that the inclusion of this data alone is not equivalent to addressing women, peace and security issues. This data must be provided alongside analysis and also, must serve as a monitoring system that concretely tracks implementation.
- **Gender Expertise & Capacity:** Reports of the Secretary-General on peace keeping and political missions, as well as the annual report on women, peace and security should contain information relating to the deployment of gender advisors and WPAs, as well as other specialist roles, as an annex. Information and analysis from gender advisor quarterly reports should be integrated more thoroughly into regular reporting cycles.
- **Sexual exploitation and abuse:** In addition to the need for robust and mandatory pre-deployment training and vetting of all personnel, reports of the Secretary-General should include a conduct and discipline section that includes information on allegations, repatriation and judicial measures, as well as provide the steps taken to prioritize the security and well-being of survivors and their access to rapid medical and psychosocial care.

About the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security

The NGOWG on Women, Peace and Security advocates for the equal and full participation of women in all efforts to create and maintain international peace and security. Formed in 2000 to call for a Security Council resolution on Women, Peace and Security, the NGOWG now focuses on implementation of all Security Council resolutions that address this issue. The NGOWG serves as a bridge between women's human rights defenders working in conflict-affected situations and policy-makers at U.N. Headquarters. The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security is a project of Tides Center.

The members of the NGOWG are: Amnesty International; CARE International; Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights; Femmes Africa Solidarité; Global Justice Center; Human Rights Watch; International Alert; The Institute for Inclusive Security; MADRE; Nobel Women's Initiative; Refugees International; Oxfam International; Women's Refugee Commission; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

Acknowledgements

The NGOWG would like to thank Chloe Lewis, Katarina Lucas, Maria Fernanda Novelo, Emma Ogg, Joey Yockey, Nadine Lainer, Aydon Edwards, Rosalie Fransen, Akshika Patel, French Smith, Angelina Pienczykowski, and Alex Raymond for their contributions as NGOWG Policy Research Fellows.