

#### ODUMUNC 2021 Issue Brief for the UN Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW)



#### **Enhancing Support Networks for Women in Peacebuilding**

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#### Introduction

The year 2020 marked two important anniversaries for international progress on eh role of women: the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the 20th anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. These milestones warrant a closer look at the developments and current situation as well as problems of the UN agenda on Women, Peace and Security.

At the Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing in 1995, 189 UN Member States agreed on a comprehensive framework identifying critical areas of concern with crucial relevance to the position and life of women and girls all over the world. Addressing uniquely female vulnerability in the areas of poverty, education, violence, armed conflict, economy, power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms, human rights, media or the environment, this framework lays out global objectives all states agreed to and provides potential actions for mitigation of the identified problems.

Five years later, under German leadership, the Security Council passed the landmark resolution UNSC 1325, which commits the international community to act on the vulnerability of women and enhance the role of women in conflict resolution. Noting that women suffer disproportionately in armed conflict, their human rights are not respected, and women are systematically excluded from the processes of conflict resolution and post-conflict decision-making, this landmark resolution declared the will of the Security Council to introduce a gendered perspective in future conflict

Since then, nine further resolutions on women, peace and security, on the inequality of women



Standing in the rain is what soldiers do. Here a female Nigerian peacekeeping soldier with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).<sup>2</sup>

Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), S/RES/1325 (2000), October 31, 2000.

https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1325%282000%29.

"Female UNMIL Peacekeeper" by United Nations
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prevention, resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations and work towards equal participation and representation of women. UNSC 1325 created a process of international law, institutions and reviews—the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda—which continue to guide UN Member States and global responses to this day.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> UN Women, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Beijing+5 Political Declaration and Outcome*, 1995 (2014 Reprint). <a href="https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa">https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa</a> e final web.pdf?la=en&vs=1203; United Nations





in conflicts, as victims ands solvers, were agreed.<sup>3</sup> Given this UN focus, and the centrality of gender equality in the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs), and the resurgence of violent conflict, a renewed look at implementation of UNSC 1325 is essential.

#### **Current situation**

The annual fall UN Security Council open debate on the progress of the women, peace and security agenda took place in the last week of October 2020. This review did not lead to any new additions to the goals or framework in existence. In his latest report to the Security Council on the implementation of the agenda, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stressed the centrality of women in conflicts and crises and the subsequent need for further and decisive action.<sup>4</sup> The report shows that:

- Between 1992 and 2020 only 13 percent of negotiators, 6 percent of mediators, and 6 percent of signatories in major peace processes were women,
- Specific gender equality provisions in peace agreements increased from 14 to 22 percent of agreements in the same timeframe,
- Currently only 44 percent of UN member states have national action plans for the WPS agenda, only 24 percent have a budget for implementation,
- 5.4 percent of UN peacekeeping military personnel and 15.1 percent of UN police are women (rising from 3 and 10 percent five years before).

Even though progress since the adoption of UNSCR 1325 can be seen, it has been slow and incremental. When UNSCR 2493 was passed in 2019 it stated that the council "remain[s] deeply concerned by persisting barriers to the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and the frequent underrepresentation of women in many formal processes and bodies related to the maintenance of international peace and security, the relatively low number of women in senior positions in political, peace and security-related national, regional and international institutions, the lack of adequate gender-sensitive humanitarian responses and support for women's leadership roles in these settings, insufficient financing for Women, Peace and Security, and the resulting detrimental impact on the maintenance of international peace and security".5

While the number of female participants in UN missions might slowly be rising, there have been negative trends in other related fields. Agreements with gender specific provisions are growing fewer and funding for UN Women and other women-centered organizations active in conflict zones has been difficult to come by.

Direct aid to programs mainly focused on improving gender equality has decreased markedly from 5.3 percent in 2015-16 to 4.5 percent in 2017-18 and aid to women organizations in affected countries has been stagnant for a decade at 0.2 percent of overall bilateral aid.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The resolutions are: UNSCR 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019) and 2493 (2019).

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Security Council, Women and peace and security: Report of the Secretary-General, S/2020/946, September 25, 2020. 2ff. https://undocs.org/en/S/2020/946.

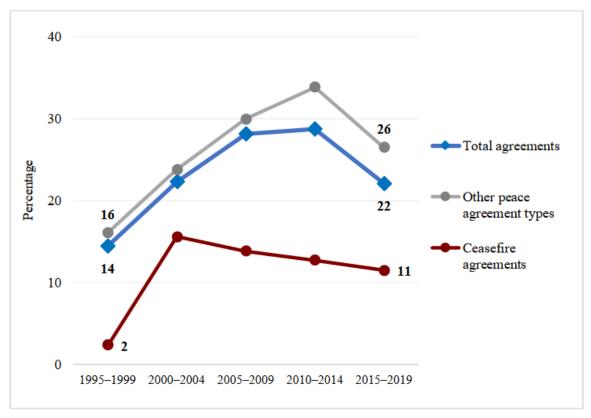
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 2493 (2019), S/RES/2493 (2019), October 29, 2019. 1. http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2493.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> UN Women, "Facts and figures: Women, peace and security", Informational page, no date. <a href="https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures">https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures</a>.





#### Percentage of peace agreements with provisions on gender equality, 1995-2019



Source: PA-X Peace Agreements Database.

Note: Other agreement types include other partial agreements and comprehensive and implementation agreements.

While there has been no better time for women in the world, these times certainly are not rosy. The UN found that in 96 percent of documented cases of conflict-related sexual violence the victims are female. 65 percent of detected trafficking victims, too, are female. The can be said that women and girls continue to suffer disproportionately in conflict situations and the efforts of the UN and the global civil society are stagnating at best.

Two problems in particular need highlighting. One is the prevalence of victimization of women by UN peacekeeping personnel. The other—

closely related—problem is the lack of women peacekeepers

#### Peacekeeping and exploitation

UN Peacekeeping Operations should by design work to defuse and diminish conflict and suffering, but recent studies have uncovered a problem of sexual exploitation and abuse in various PKOs. Various peacekeeping operations have seen widespread Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) of civilians by peacekeeping personnel. UN statistics show that in 2020 alone

Watch, January 11, 2020.

https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/01/11/un-peacekeeping-has-sexual-abuse-problem.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> UN Women, facts and figures.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Skye Wheeler, "UN Peacekeeping has a Sexual Abuse Problem", *The Hill*, cited in Human Rights





there were over 40 official accusations of SEA in the missions in the Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Lebanon, South Sudan and Sudan.<sup>9</sup>

The dangers posed by peacekeepers raises the issue of *the peacekeeping dilemma*. Peacekeeping soldiers often are isolated, working under dangerous circumstances for long periods of time. Male soldiers have great power over the communities they protect, which invites abuse. But the UN system relies on Member States to send peacekeepers.

If Member States fear their personal will be prosecuted, they may be less willing to send desperately needed personnel.

The seriousness of the *peacekeeping dilemma* is unmistakable. A study of the causes and effects

of SEA, on vulnerable female populations in Haiti in 2019, showed women were impoverished by their experiences with UN personnel. SEA is "the most significant risk to UN peacekeeping missions." It endangers civilians with networked trafficking, opportunistic rape, transactional survival sex (prostitution) or sadistic attacks on women, girls and boys. It destroys trust in the UN and its missions in the countries immediately affected and in the wider global public. 12

This problem was recognized within UNMIK (the UN peacekeeping force in Kosovo) as early as 2003, when a zero-tolerance policy for UN peacekeeping personnel was adopted. This was followed by preventative workshops and, through UNSC 2272 (2016), mandatory return of

Abuse

Exploitation

Number of substantiated allegations involving uniformed personnel:

174

### Actions taken by national governments



#### Action taken by the United Nations



https://conduct.unmissions.org/table-of-allegations. 

10 Sabine Lee and Susanne Bartels, "'They Put a Few Coins in Your Hand to Drop a Baby in You': A Study of Peacekeeper-fathered Children in Haiti," International Peacekeeping 27 No. 2 (2020).

https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1353 3312.2019.1698297.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> United Nations Missions, "Conduct in UN Field Missions: Sexual Exploitation and Abuse," catalogue of incidents, no date.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Jasmine-Kim Westendorf and Louise Searle, "Sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations: trends, policy responses and future directions," *International Affairs* 93 No. 2 (2017): 365-387. <a href="https://academic.oup.com/ia/article/93/2/365/2982">https://academic.oup.com/ia/article/93/2/365/2982</a> 811.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> See Westendorf and Searle, (2017): 368-374.





offending personnel.<sup>13</sup> These measures, however, do not adequately diminish the problem. Since the UN does not have jurisdiction over the military or police personnel (they are controlled, usually paid and supported, entirely by their home governments), handling of the offenses remains a national concern.

Not only is accountability of both the UN and contributing member states problematic, victim support, too, has been difficult to address. A UN trust fund for victim support has only seen voluntary contributions from 21 nations, not including France, China, Russia, the UK and the United States. <sup>14</sup> Other measures concerning when and how to assist female victims in conflict through UN organs are regularly fought over. This will be addressed in the country specific section further down.

#### Women as peacebuilders

The UN has made small gains in the percentage of women as participants in peacebuilding missions but contributing nations often do not reach the same ratio of women in PKOs as in their regular armed forces. <sup>15</sup> Perceptions of higher risk and uncertainty, especially in newly established missions, have been correlated to

nations proportionately sending lower numbers of women into the field.<sup>16</sup>

It has been shown, however, that participation of women in PKO makes access to the civilian populations easier and is correlated to lower rates of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) by peacekeepers, <sup>17</sup> which can contribute to greater trust into the mission. The inclusion of women in peacekeeping contingents helps defuse conflicts. Overall, states with higher gender equality are less likely to have violent conflict and the participation of women in peace processes as well as the inclusion of gender specific passages in peace treaties lead to longer lasting peace and help resolve conflict faster. <sup>18</sup>

Despite these clear advantages following a stronger inclusion of women in peace processes and despite the existence of the Beijing Declaration and UNSCR 1325 and other resolutions, actions of contributing nations fall short of the set goal.

While the human rights of women have been under attack across the globe the UN organs, too, through their contributing member states have slowed their engagement towards full implementation of the women, peace, and security agenda. Understanding what states drive or hinder progress on implementation or

https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/seafact sheet 1.pdf.

of Female Personnel to UN Peacekeeping," *International Peacekeeping* 27 No. 4 (2020), 673-702. <a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/135">https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/135</a> 33312.2020.1760717?needAccess=true.

 $\frac{https://wps.unwomen.org/pdf/en/GlobalStudy\_EN\_}{Web.pdf}.$ 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> UN Peacekeeping, Fact Sheet: Sexual Exploitation and Abuse – Peacekeeping Initiatives in Action, last updated December 18, 2019.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> See page 5 of the fact sheet for signatories and financial contributors. UN Peacekeeping, Fact Sheet SEA, 2019. 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Charles Kenny, "Using Financial Incentives to Increase the Number of Women in UN Peacekeeping," Center for Global Development Notes, October 17, 2016.

https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/using-financial-incentives-increase-number-women-unpeacekeeping.pdf.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Kajsa Tidblad-Lundholm, "When are Women Deployed? Operational Uncertainty and Deployment

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> UN Women, Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, 2015. 141f.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Jamille Bigio and Rachel Vogelstein, "How Women's Participation in Conflict Prevention and Resolution Advances U.S. Interests," Council on Foreign Relations Discussion Paper, October 2016. 5. <a href="https://cdn.cfr.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2016/10/D">https://cdn.cfr.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2016/10/D</a> <a href="https://cdn.cfr.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2016/D">https://cdn.cfr.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2016/D</a> <a href="https://cdn.cfr.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2016/D">https://cdn.cfr.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2016/D</a> <a href="https://cdn.cfr.org/si





development of new or additional frameworks on women in conflicts will illuminate current dynamics in the UN.



UN Secretary-General meets with Syrian refugee women and girls in Jordan. <sup>19</sup>

#### **Country and Bloc Positions**

In the latest resolution from the Security Council calls for reengagement of the 1325 goals and pushes renewed member state interest in the women, peace and security agenda. With the lack of enforcement mechanisms, the member states are responsible for ongoing implementation of any resolution. A look at the prominent UN Member States and their individual behavior in connection to this dynamic is illuminating.

China has been engaging in more foreign aid and peacekeeping operations over the past few years, but remains among the nations with lower numbers of women in their contributions. With

gender equality goals of the early communist phase being gradually reversed in China and ongoing allegations of gross human rights' violations, especially in 2020's Xinjiang province, China was reported pressuring Russia to strike any potentially binding mentions of human rights from their resolution proposals.<sup>20</sup>

China strong support national sovereignty and resists international oversight of its actions. It regards problems with peacekeepers as a responsibility for the home governments of Member States. Chinese leaders are not blind to problems like SEA, but fear infringement of the foreign actors in its domestic affairs on the basis of human or women's rights.

Russia too has resisted implementation of prior commitments and has been critical of further resolutions. In 2019, a Russian ambassador voiced concern over men's rights if further inclusion of women is sought.<sup>21</sup> Russia introduced a resolution to dilute prior commitments to the women, peace and security (WPA) agenda.<sup>22</sup> Russia often acts in conjunction with China with regard to the implementation of women human rights mentions in UNSC texts. Russian representatives argue that further following of the WPS agenda lies outside of UN jurisdiction and should, therefore, not be undertaken and left for other UN organs to deal with.<sup>23</sup>

But Russia has many serious needs for international cooperation elsewhere, and may be willing to find compromises that serve the interests of all sides. But there are limits. Neither

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> "Jordan - UN Secretary-General meets with Syrian Refugee Women and Girls" by UN Women Gallery is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Edith Lederer, "UN defeats Russia resolution promoting women at peace tables," *abc News*, October 30, 2020.

https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/defeatsrussia-resolution-promoting-women-peace-tables-73934620.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Release, "Deployment of Female Personnel Boosts Effectiveness, Says Secretary-General, as Security Council Holds Open Debate on Women in Peacekeeping," News Release, April 11, 2019. https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13773.doc.ht m.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Lederer 2020.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Security Council Report, *Women, Peace and Security: The Agenda at 20*, 2020.





Russia nor China are major funding partners for the work of UN Women.<sup>24</sup>

European Union: While the European Union is not a singular actor within the UN, regarding the WPS the 27 Member States of the EU tend to act in accord.

Germany introduced the resolution that forms the basis for the agenda and has continued to work towards implementation.

The EU as an entity is the greatest contributor to the funding of UN Women, with the majority of the 20 biggest contributors being European states in addition. Furthermore, the trust fund for survivors of SEA is mainly financed by European states as well.<sup>25</sup>

Following the American objections to international measures on women's reproductive rights, European Union members and the United Kingdom have been clear on their discontent with the US position. European states also often clash with Russia and China over their stance on the inclusion of explicit mentions of human rights of women.<sup>26</sup>

Non-Aligned Movement: The 120 Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement, the UN's largest voting bloc, support UN action on these issues. But their general support doe not conceal important differences. While some NAM Member States are strong supportive—especially in Latin America and southern Africa—others are concerned with preservation of national

sovereignty, or defense of traditional maledominated social orders.

These differences may explain why the NAM has not put a strong emphasis on this complex of issues. The document published following their latest conference and outlining their focus for coming years cursorily addresses the strengthening of women and their participation mostly through a family-centered lens. The problem of SEA is nearly absent and neither a NAM-centered approach nor potential UN goals are strengthened.<sup>27</sup>

United States of America: In UNSCR 2493 the Security Council demanded that all states formal ratify (make part of their domestic law) the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to finally ratify. One of the states missing ratification is the United States.

A major roadblock for the US under President Trump is opposition to any international agreement addressing reproductive health and women's' right to abortions, even in cases following rape or medical necessity. This resistance led to major changes in the latest UN resolution.<sup>28</sup> American officials also worry that international consensus on health care for women, as well as parental rights and sexual

https://www.unwomen.org/en/partnerships/donorcountries.

https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65 BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/research report women peace and security 2020.pdf.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> For the major donors of UN Women see: UN Women, "Government partners," fact sheet on funding provenance, no date. https://www.unwomen.org/en/partnerships/donor-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> United Nations, "Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse," fact sheet, no date. https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/trust-fund.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Security Council Report, *Women, Peace and Security: The Agenda at 20*, 2020. 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Non-Aligned Movement, 18<sup>th</sup> Mid-Term Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Final Document, April 3-6, 2018. See especially ch.III. subchapter on advancement on women, 202-206. <a href="https://www.namazerbaijan.org/pdf/NAM-Baku-Final-Document.pdf">https://www.namazerbaijan.org/pdf/NAM-Baku-Final-Document.pdf</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Security Council Report, *Women, Peace and Security: The Agenda at 20,* Research Report, June 19, 2020. 8.





education could invite foreign interference in American domestic affairs in these areas.<sup>29</sup>

#### A way ahead?

To summarize major problems concerning implementing the WPS agenda:

- lack of unified vision going forward,
- stagnating funding for women-centered UN organs and measures,
- major differences between major players concerning the issues of women's health and reproductive rights, human rights,
- continuing narratives within participating states of women as victims and without agency,
- lack of accountability for UN peacekeepers SEA,

These are major roadblocks that have stood in the way of significant steps in the implementation of both the Beijing Declaration and UNSC 1325.

#### What can be done?

Financial aid for women peacekeepers and with victim assistance. Money support involving women as peacekeepers, and participants in peace processes, as part of WPS, is badly needed. So is money to investigate and prosecute SEA and help victims. As voluntary contributions already make up the majority of funds available and core,

recurrent funding by member states is stagnating, other resources need to be investigated. A small but symbolic step; the UN has started to withhold pay for servicemen repatriated after substantiated SEA allegations.

A major problem is where this funding could come from. Member States are hesitant about new obligations. Countries providing peacekeeping personal often are poor.



Part of the solution? Members of the Guatemalan contingent of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) participate in a medal award ceremony in recognition of their service. <sup>30</sup>

 More systematic investigations. Since SEA investigations are still patchy, and funding is a major barrier, funding for investigation would help significantly. If service personnel have already left their UN assignment, litigation to restitution to victims could be a potential measure and serve as potential incentive to other

<sup>29</sup> Reservations and debates regarding CEDAW and wider implications see: Luisa Blanchfield, *The U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): Issues in the U.S. Ratification Debate*, Congressional Research Service, June 28, 2011.

https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40750.pdf. Or see: Congressional Research Service, *The U.N. Convention* on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): Issues in the U.S. Ratification Debate, July 23, 2015.

https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20150723 R4 0750\_23d1ed01375d35bac894fded0717405e5b592e d4.pdf.

30 "MINUSTAH Guatemalan Officers Participate in Medal Award Ceremony" by United Nations Photo is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.





perpetrators and their home governments. Also, the UN chould adopt measures and tools for victims of UN personnel to seek judicial help mandating perpetrators to pay child support, medical support and other measures the victim needs to seek out.

• Ensure more female participants in UN peacekeeping missions. UN Member States could actively seek to advertise their missions within the participating armed forces. As the percentage of female personnel contributed is often lower than the norm in the member states nation, potential female mission members could be recruited through direct targeting, enabling women to seek

out these positions on their own, rather than trying to rely on often malecentered decision making in contributions.

• Aid with conflict resolution and peace processes. The UN could actively seek out civil society groups and domestic women's rights groups and make their engagement binding for any UN-backed peace process. Additionally, the UNSC needs to hold contributing states accountable for low numbers of female peace actors, potentially through monetary means. Coupling certain prestigious UN positions with reaching of WPS goals could be an option.





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