

EPON 

Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network

Women, Peace and Security in MONUSCO

Trends, Lessons and Emerging Practices

Lisa Sharland & Dr Jenny Lorentzen

Dr Andrew E. Yaw Tchie & Dr Eli Stamnes



Celebrating 25 years of the Training for Peace programme

Publisher: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs

Copyright: © Norwegian Institute of International Affairs 2024

ISBN: 978-82-7002-372-1

Any views expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They should not be interpreted as reflecting the views of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs or the Training for Peace Programme.

Visiting address: C.J. Hambros plass 2d

Address: P.O. Box 8159 Dep. NO-0033 Oslo, Norway

Internet: effectivepeaceops.net | www.nupi.no

E-mail: info@nupi.no

Fax: [+ 47] 22 99 40 50

Tel.: [+ 47] 22 99 40 00

Cover photo: MONUSCO

Women, Peace and Security in MONUSCO: Trends, Lessons and Emerging Practices

Lead authors

Lisa Sharland, Team Leader – Stimson Center

Dr Jenny Lorentzen – Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI)

Co-authors

Dr Andrew E. Yaw Tchie – Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI)

Dr Eli Stamnes – Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI)

Contributors

Dr Emily Helms (UK), Jenny Nortvedt (NUPI, Norway), Julie Gregory (Stimson Center, USA),
Rønnaug Eli Holmøy (Norwegian Defence University College, Norway),
Amina Helal (CCCPA, Egypt), and Assal Mahmoud (CCCPA, Egypt)

EPON series editor

Dr Cedric de Coning – Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI)



*Kinshasa, D.R. Congo – 29 May 2024: Celebration of International Peacekeepers' Day at MONUSCO HQ.
(Photo: MONUSCO / Jean-Claude Wenga)*

Contents

- Acknowledgements 5
- Summary 7
- Acronyms 11
- 1. Introduction 13
- 2. Methodology 17
- 3. Context: Conflict, Gender and Peacekeeping in the DRC 21
 - 3.1. Conflict and gender in the DRC 21
 - 3.2. Governance and efforts to address gender inequality 24
 - 3.3. UN Peacekeeping in the DRC 26
- 4. WPS Language in MONUSCO Mandates 31
- 5. Analysis and Findings 39
 - 5.1. Matching mandates and resources 39
 - 5.2. Primacy of participation 47
 - 5.3. Addressing gender assumptions and improving gender-responsiveness 56
 - 5.4. People-centred approaches: building trust and a protective environment 61

6.	Conclusion	67
7.	Recommendations	71
7.1.	For MONUSCO	71
7.2.	For the UN Security Council and Member States	72
7.3.	For Troop- and Police-Contributing Countries	73
7.4.	For UN Headquarters	73
7.5.	For Host Authorities	73
8.	Annexure 1: Interview questions	75
9.	Annexure 2: EPON project summary	77

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the UN’s Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and the UN Organizational Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) for their guidance and support throughout this study. The authors are grateful to all interviewees for sharing insights, experiences and documents and responding to follow-up requests.

The report benefited from the advice and comments provided on drafts by a wide range of independent reviewers. Thank you for taking the time to provide your input. The research team would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Georgetown University practicum students to a wider cross-mission research base on women, peace and security in peacekeeping as part of this project in 2022.

Finally, this study would not have been possible without the generous funding and institutional support provided by the Training for Peace Programme (TfP) and the UN Peace Operations project.



*Kinshasa, D.R. Congo – 29 May 2024: Celebration of International Peacekeepers' Day at MONUSCO HQ.
(Photo: MONUSCO / Jean-Claude Wenga)*

Summary

For nearly 25 years, the United Nations (UN) has had a peacekeeping mission deployed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The UN Organization Mission in the DRC (MONUC) was deployed in 1999. The deployment of MONUC coincided with an evolution taking place in the UN Security Council regarding the centrality of women’s political participation in peace processes and the importance of considering women’s protection needs as part of the maintenance of international peace and security. The adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 and the establishment of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in the year 2000 would have an instrumental impact on the mandates of UN peacekeeping missions, including those deployed in the DRC over the following two decades.

As the mandate of MONUC, and later of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), evolved in the two decades that followed, the Security Council applied many of the normative evolutions taking place in the WPS agenda to the peacekeeping missions. The Council drew specifically on provisions included in nine subsequent thematic resolutions on WPS to inform the drafting of provisions in the mandates of MONUC and MONUSCO. These included elements focused on women’s meaningful political participation as well as efforts to protect women from conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and human rights abuses and to integrate a gender perspective across the work of the mission.

This report examines how MONUSCO has worked to implement the WPS dimensions of its mandate in the period 2010 to 2021. This is based on an analysis of the mandate resolution texts during this time to identify trends over time and key themes, as well as an analysis of documents and interviews with MONUSCO personnel carried out in 2021. Assessing the approach to the mandate and its more recent implementation offers insights into the contribution and

limitations of UN peacekeeping when it comes to advancing women's protection and meaningful participation in a conflict-affected environment.

MONUSCO's approach to WPS has evolved in the period under study. The mandate had a rather narrow understanding of WPS at the outset, with provisions to address violence and threats towards women, reflective of the insecurity and gendered threats within the DRC. These threats have remained, as have more comprehensive provisions in the mandate to address them, but the mandate has also evolved in recent years to include a more substantive focus on women's participation in conflict prevention and political processes. These evolutions in the mandate reflected evolving thinking and political priorities on WPS among UN Security Council Member States, as well as the emerging political and security needs in the country. The mission has consequently adapted its approach to different gendered threats to civilians and efforts to support gender equality across Congolese society, while recognising that some aspects of the mandate require the investment and support of partners, including the host authorities.

The mission has also put in place mechanisms to assess the progress and hold different components accountable for their activities on WPS using the gender scorecard. These mechanisms were illustrated during a substantive period of research for this study in 2021 and 2022, and they remain in place as MONUSCO prepares to transition (drawdown) from the country.

The mission has developed a range of innovative practices targeted at improving women's security and equality in the country, as part of the WPS provisions in MONUSCO's mandate. These have included developing a women mediators' network, mapping security threats to women, supporting initiatives to address discriminatory media coverage, and implementing positive masculinity programmes. The mission has also put in place mechanisms to assess the progress and hold different components accountable for their activities on WPS using the gender scorecard. These mechanisms were illustrated during a substantive period of research for this study in 2021 and 2022, and they remain in place as MONUSCO prepares to transition (drawdown) from the country.

However, women in the DRC still face staggering levels of inequality and violence. Women are subject to horrific levels of CRSV from armed groups and, in some instances, the national security forces that are meant to protect them. While there have been improvements in women's political representation in national and local governance, as well as regional peace processes, societal norms and expectations regarding women continue to limit more progress on equality. The external security and political environment, along with conservative gender norms and

stereotypes across Congolese society, have limited the effectiveness of MONUSCO when it comes to improving the situation for women in the DRC. Such efforts have also been compounded by some internal mission dynamics relating to the availability of resources and capabilities to support a more comprehensive implementation of the WPS mandate, with a decentralised approach to integrating gender into the work of different mission components.

This report offers recommendations to MONUSCO, UN Headquarters, the Security Council and Member States, troop- and police-contributing countries (T/PCCs), and the national authorities when it comes to strengthening the implementation of the WPS aspects of the mission's mandate in the DRC, with wider lessons for other UN peacekeeping missions in terms of their approach to WPS.



Goma, North Kivu, D.R. Congo - 18 September 2024: MONUSCO UN Police (UNPOL) SPT-VSBG unit, accompanied by the UNPOL Sector Chief in Goma, donated to Cooperative of Women Living in and Around Mining Sites (COVEFAM) several kits to help facilitate Sexual/Gender-based Violence (SGBV) reporting and follow-up. COVEFAM, with several offices in the region, is an important partner to the Congolese national Police and UN Police in the fight against SGBV crimes. (Photo: MONUSCO / Kevin Jordan)

Acronyms

CCCPA	Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CLA	Community Liaison Assistant
CRSV	Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
CPAS	Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System
CVR	Community Violence Reduction
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (of combatants into society)
DPO	Department of Peace Operations
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DRSG	Deputy Representative of the Secretary-General
EAC	East African Community
EACRF	East African Community Regional Force
EPON	Effectiveness of Peacekeeping Operations Network
FARDC	Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HRDPP	Human Rights Due Diligence Policy
HRV	Human Rights Violation
IDP	Internally Displaced Person

IRC	International Rescue Committee
JHRO	Joint Human Rights Office
JMAC	Joint Mission Analysis Centre
JMC	Joint Military Commission
M23	March 23 Movement
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MONUC	United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NUPI	Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
PCC	Police-Contributing Country
PKO	Peacekeeping Operation
PNC	Police Nationale Congolaise
POC	Protection of Civilians
PRIO	Peace Research Institute Oslo
SAGE	Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise
SAMIDRC	Southern African Development Community Mission in the DRC
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
SRSG-SVC	Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict
SSR	Security Sector reform
TCC	Troop-Contributing Country
TfP	Training for Peace Programme
UN	United Nations
UNPOL	United Nations Police
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNV	United Nations Volunteer
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

1. Introduction

UN peacekeeping has been invested in supporting national efforts for peace, security, and stability in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for more than 25 years. When the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) took over from the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) on 1 July 2010, this reflected a new phase. While MONUC was initially deployed following the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement in July 1999, which attempted to end the Second Congo War, MONUSCO was established following the country's first free elections, albeit in the context of ongoing conflicts in a number of DRC provinces. MONUSCO has been authorised to use all necessary means to carry out its mandate relating, among other things, to the protection of civilians (PoC) under imminent threat of physical violence and to support the Government of the DRC in its stabilisation and peace consolidation efforts.

In parallel to the UN's peacekeeping presence in the DRC, we have seen the emergence and growth of an international normative framework known as the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, which has had an important impact on the formulation of peacekeeping mandates and peacekeeping practice. When Resolution 1325 on WPS was adopted in 2000 by the UN Security Council (UNSC), it was considered a historic breakthrough in the recognition of women's roles in the prevention and resolution of armed conflict and in understanding how conflict affects women and men differently and how the needs of men and women, therefore, should be addressed specifically.¹ Since then, nine additional resolutions have been adopted by

1 S/RES/1325 (2000).

the UNSC, and together, these constitute an international normative and political framework known as the WPS agenda.² The WPS agenda focuses on four pillars:

- Prevention (of conflict and all forms of violence against women);
- Protection (from violence, including sexual and gender-based violence and human rights abuses);
- Participation (of women at all levels of decision-making); and
- Relief and recovery (applying a gendered lens in crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction and addressing the needs of women and girls).

The WPS agenda has had a significant impact on local, national and regional policy formation, which has included substantive efforts towards implementing the agenda by the UN system and many Member States.³ Peacekeeping operations were directly addressed in Resolution 1325 and have since been a key arena for the implementation of the WPS agenda. Notably, Resolution 1325 was grounded in many of the lessons emerging from the ‘Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations’, which drew on lessons from peacekeeping missions and identified areas for ‘gender equality to permeate the entire mission’.⁴

In the years since the adoption of Resolution 1325, it has become commonplace for UN peacekeeping mandates to include provisions on WPS. This has included language aimed at advancing gender equality and WPS commitments in the country where the peacekeeping mission is deployed. Peacekeeping operations are also mandated to consider gender as a cross-cutting issue (including through ‘gender-sensitive’ and ‘gender-responsive’ approaches) and, more specifically, to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence, protect women from violence and human rights abuses, and support the participation of women in political processes and institutions.⁵ Furthermore, peacekeeping mandates have included provisions focused on enabling the mission to be more effective in its response, including by increasing the number of women in missions, instituting reporting mechanisms on WPS, providing resources and enhancing capabilities for gender and WPS work, and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by peacekeepers.⁶

2 S/RES/1820 (2008); S/RES/1888 (2009); S/RES/1889 (2009); S/RES/1960 (2010); S/RES/2106 (2013); S/RES/2122 (2013); S/RES/2242 (2015); S/RES/2467(2019); S/RES/2493 (2019).

3 As of May 2024, 109 countries have adopted National Action Plans (NAPs) on WPS (including the DRC); however, around 30% of them are outdated (meaning they expired in 2022 or before). See: www.1325naps.peacewomen.org (accessed 15 August 2024).

4 UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Windhoek Declaration on the Tenth Anniversary of the United Nations Transitional Group*, UN Doc. A/55/138-S/2000/693, 14 July 2000. See also Barbara Crossette, ‘Five Months before UNSCR 1325, the Seminar that Set the Scene’, *Passblue*, 8 October 2020; Sharland, L. ‘Women, Peace and Security Mandates for UN Peacekeeping Operations: Assessing Influence and Impact’, International Peace Institute, January 2021.

5 See: Sharland, ‘Women, Peace and Security Mandates for UN Peacekeeping Operations’, op. cit., p. 4.

6 Ibid.

However, many have criticised the WPS agenda and its implementation in the context of UN peacekeeping, with differing views expressed by Security Council members on the priority attached to the inclusion of WPS provisions within mandates.⁷ This has been compounded by some of the challenges with implementation and efforts to move beyond normative commitments to action on the ground. The framing and conceptualisation of mandates have resulted in variations in interpretation and practice in mandate implementation. At times, mandates have highlighted different aspects of the agenda, sometimes emphasising numbers of women peacekeepers (especially in the early years following the adoption of Resolution 1325) rather than focusing on their meaningful participation and substantive impact, or the use of stereotypes that place an ‘added burden’ on women rather than recognising the value of both women *and* men contributing to certain tasks and roles.⁸ Additionally, some mandates have included an emphasis on women as victims, and their protection rather than on women as agents of change, and some have had challenges in defining and operationalising gender and accountability.⁹

UN peacekeeping operations have further gone through several changes since the adoption of Resolution 1325 in 2000. While peacekeeping is deployed in many configurations, MONUSCO and missions such as the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the former UN peacekeeping mission in Mali, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), are multidimensional missions with strong protection and stabilisation mandates. Multidimensional peacekeeping operations are called upon not only to maintain peace and security, but also to facilitate the political process, protect civilians, assist in the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants, support the organisation of elections, protect and promote human rights, and assist in restoring the rule of law.¹⁰

This report examines how MONUSCO has worked to implement the WPS dimensions of its mandate in the period 2010 to 2021. This is based on an analysis of the mandate resolution texts from 2010 to 2021, identifying trends over time and key themes, as well as an analysis of documents and interviews with MONUSCO personnel carried out in 2021. The report is part

7 Most recently, there were different positions among Council members on the inclusion of language in the resolution authorising MONUSCO logistical support to the Southern African Development Community mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC) in eastern DRC, with Russia opposing inclusion of an operative paragraph on the parallel force being required to consider a ‘gender perspective’. See: UNSC, ‘Democratic Republic of the Congo: Vote on a Draft Resolution Authorising Support to SAMIDRC’, What’s in Blue, Security Council Report, 6 August 2024.

8 See: Wilén, N. ‘What’s the ‘Added Value’ of Male Peacekeepers? (Or – Why We Should Stop Instrumentalising Female Peacekeepers’ Participation)’, Egmont Institute, February 2020; S/RES/2538 (2020). Security Council Resolution 2538 (adopted in August 2020) sought to address some of these stereotypes by recognising ‘that the presence of women and better balance between men and women peacekeepers contribute to, among others, greater credibility of the missions’ (p. 1).

9 Raven-Roberts, A. ‘Gender Mainstreaming in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Talking the Talk, Tripping over the Walk’. In: *Gender, Conflict, and Peacekeeping*, edited by D. Mazurana, A. Raven-Roberts, and J. Parpart. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005 (pp. 63-91); Simić, O., ‘Increasing women’s presence in peacekeeping operations: The rationales and realities of ‘gender balance’’, In: *Rethinking Peacekeeping, Gender Equality and Collective Security*, edited by G. Heathcote and D. Otto. Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2014; Reilly, N., ‘How ending impunity for conflict-related sexual violence overwhelmed the UN women, peace, and security agenda: A discursive genealogy’, *Violence Against Women*, 24, 6: 631-649, 2018; Baldwin, G., ‘Considering the future of gender and peace operations: strategic debates and operational challenges’, SIPRI insights on peace and security, Stockholm, September 2022.

10 UN Peacekeeping, ‘What we do’, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/what-we-do> (accessed 26 September 2024).

of the work carried out by the Effectiveness of Peacekeeping Operations Network (EPON), and it provides conclusions and recommendations at a moment of reflection for UN peacekeeping, the international multilateral system, and MONUSCO.

The report proceeds as follows: First, it provides an introduction to the context of conflict, gender, and efforts to address gender inequality in the DRC, as well as an overview of UN Peacekeeping in the country. Second, it surveys the WPS language and strategic priorities that have been included in MONUSCO's mandates between 2010 and 2021. Third, it assesses the implementation of the WPS aspects of MONUSCO's mandate with a focus on four explanatory factors contributing to the effectiveness of the mission. Finally, it provides some reflections and recommendations for MONUSCO and other relevant actors to advance WPS, including enhancing women's protection, improving women's meaningful political participation, and shifting the conversation on gender stereotypes to improve gender equality and uphold normative commitments. Importantly, it acknowledges that MONUSCO is only one actor in these efforts intended to bring peace and security to DRC.

The target audience for the present study's findings and recommendations is the UNSC, UN Member States including Troop- and Police-Contributing Countries (T/PCCs), UN Peace operations and personnel, the UN Secretariat, host states, and key stakeholders. While the report is focused on MONUSCO, some of the findings have relevance for other UN multi-dimensional peacekeeping missions and their efforts to strengthen the implementation of the WPS agenda. The report findings also extend to entities such as peacekeeping training centres, individual researchers and research institutions with a focus on peacekeeping, WPS, and gender, peace and security more broadly.

2. Methodology

This thematic study builds on the methodology developed to support country-specific Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON) studies.¹¹ Although country-specific EPON studies have included WPS as one of the six explanatory factors, there was often limited scope to address it. This report seeks to bridge that gap in the context of DRC and build on a series of studies focusing on thematic aspects of peacekeeping mandates. Consequently, the research has been guided by the following question:

How effective has MONUSCO been in implementing the WPS dimensions of its mandate?

To answer this question, we first analyse the WPS dimensions of the missions’ mandate. Through an analysis of the mandate resolution texts from 2010 to 2021, we identify trends over time, key themes, target groups (i.e., who the mandate is addressing with specific provisions), and provision orientation (i.e., whether directed to the peacekeeping mission itself or to affect the situation in its area of operation). Further, the main part of the analysis focuses on how and to what extent the mission has been able to implement the WPS elements of its mandate, and what factors have had an impact on the ability of the mission to implement the WPS aspects of its mandate. This part is based on an analysis of documents and interviews with mission personnel. Here, we draw on four explanatory factors already established in the EPON methodology: 1) Realistic mandates and matching resources; 2) The primacy of participation; 3) Underlying gender perspective; 4) People-centred approach. We finally reflect on the mission’s potential to address the gendered conflict dynamics in its area of operations in light of these findings.

11 See: Methodological Framework for EPON Case Studies, <https://effectivepeaceops.net/#about>.

The study is a collaboration of ten researchers representing four institutions: The Stimson Center (USA), Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), Norwegian Defence University College, and Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCPA) (Egypt).

Desktop research and analysis of documents were carried out between September 2021 and April 2022. Qualitative analysis was undertaken of MONUSCO mandate resolution texts from 2010 to 2021 to provide context for the study and understand strategic priorities within the Security Council. These were coded into categories with sub-categories (see section 4). To get a broader picture of how WPS and gender equality issues are framed and addressed in the mandate texts, by whom, in what contexts, and over the course of time, coding followed an inductive research strategy. This allowed categories to reflect the content of the mandates rather than being predetermined. The dataset consists of all mandate resolution texts covering the study period (see below). It includes 12 resolutions adopted by the UNSC with MONUSCO mandates, from Resolution 1925 (2010) to Resolution 2612 (2021).

The team further conducted one virtual interview with the UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO) Gender Unit in New York and 18 virtual interviews with mission personnel in the DRC between October and December 2021. This includes two interviews with military personnel, one police officer, and 15 interviews with civilian mission staff, of which ten were based in Kinshasa, four in Goma, and one in Beni. The civilian personnel represented different units within the mission, including the Gender Affairs Unit, Civil Affairs Section, Political Affairs Division, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration unit, Security Sector Reform (SSR) unit, Joint Mission Analysis Cell, PoC, Joint Human Rights Office (JHRO), Strategic Planning Unit, and senior mission leadership. All interview notes and references to interviews have been anonymised in accordance with relevant ethical regulations and guidelines.

Building on the initial desk research and methodology, a set of interview questions was designed covering a range of strategic and operational aspects of the mission's work with WPS. This included a focus on the mission's activities on WPS; women's protection concerns; barriers to women's participation in electoral, political, security and government institutions; measurements of success, reporting and accountability; division of responsibility for implementation; availability (or lack of) mission resources; prioritisation and weighing of different aspects of the WPS mandate; gender considerations as a cross-cutting issue; and collaboration with the DRC government on WPS (see Annexure 1).

This report is the first attempt to adapt the EPON methodology to study WPS as a thematic issue in a particular mission. While field visits were initially planned, the research was entirely desk-based and virtual due to travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic during the time that the study was being carried out. During the empirical part of the study, the research team focused primarily on the mission and its activities. The interviews were limited to mission personnel at the time of the research; therefore, efforts to incorporate perspectives and analysis from civil society (where possible) have drawn on desktop research.

Given that the mission's transition (drawdown) plan was under development and its impact on the mission's WPS activities was unclear at the time of the interviews, this aspect did not feature much in the interviews and thus receives limited attention in the report. We, however, recommend that future studies take into account the specific aspects and impacts of transitions on WPS mandates and activities of UN peacekeeping operations, as well as systematically assessing the existing capacities of civil society, local institutions, and national partners.



Goma, North Kivu, D.R. Congo – 3 October 2024: Major General Khar Diouf, Acting Commander of the MONUSCO Force, led the medal ceremony for Force Headquarters personnel in Goma. In his speech, he congratulated the recipients of the medal and expressed his gratitude to them for their unwavering dedication to the mandate of the mission and urged all participants to strictly respect the rules of conduct of MONUSCO. (Photo: MONUSCO)

3. Context: Conflict, Gender and Peacekeeping in the DRC

3.1. Conflict and gender in the DRC

The conflict in the DRC has its roots in the Belgian colonisation in the 19th century, and governance systems following independence characterised by the extraction of natural resources, human rights violations (HRVs) and ethnic tensions. The 1994 genocide in Rwanda and the inflow of Rwandan refugees contributed to destabilising the already fragile security and political situation in the country. In 1996, the dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko, which had ruled the DRC for more than 30 years (known as Zaire from 1971 to 1997), was overthrown in a rebellion led by Laurent Désiré Kabila and supported by troops from Rwanda and Uganda. This was followed by the first and second Congo wars between 1996 and 2003. In the second Congo war from 1998 to 2003 (also known as the ‘African World War’), Rwanda, Angola and Uganda invaded the DRC, targeting Hutu fighters from Rwanda, and Namibia, Zimbabwe, Eritrea and Sudan were later pulled into the war.¹² The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has estimated that 3.9 million people died between 1998 and 2004, with most deaths being due to preventable and treatable conditions.¹³ The Lusaka agreement of 1999 sought to bring an end to hostilities and called for the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force to monitor the ceasefire, investigate violations with the Joint Military Commission (JMC), and disarm, demobilise

12 Hochschild, A., *King Leopold’s Ghost: a story of greed, terror and heroism in colonial Africa*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998; Mamdani, M. *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001; Autesserre, S., ‘Local Violence, National Peace? Post-War ‘Settlement’ in the Eastern DR Congo 2003–2006’, *African Studies Review*, 49(3): 1–29, 2006.

13 IRC, ‘Mortality in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Results from a Nationwide Survey’, IRC and Burnet Institute, 2005.

and reintegrate armed groups.¹⁴ This was followed by the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, which culminated in the Sun City Agreement in 2003 – a comprehensive agreement that outlined the process for the transformation of the political climate within the DRC.¹⁵

The gendered nature of conflict in the DRC can be seen in the impact of the numerous wars on civilian women, children, and men, who were sometimes deliberately executed during attacks by various military forces.¹⁶ Traditional gender roles have been challenged by conflict and have even been instrumentalised and weaponised to cause further division and instability as part of the conflict. Armed groups have utilised sexual violence to harm and violate women, and in some instances, with the intention to emasculate men, thereby spurring them to join the conflict.

Traditional gender roles have been challenged by conflict and have even been instrumentalised and weaponised to cause further division and instability as part of the conflict. Armed groups have utilised sexual violence to harm and violate women, and in some instances, with the intention to emasculate men, thereby spurring them to join the conflict.

The gendered impact of conflict affects both men and women. Women are increasingly engaging in economic activities outside of the household, and many men find it difficult to fulfil their traditional role as breadwinner and protector of the family.¹⁷ Because of the conflict, many women have had to adapt their roles as heads of households continually, but also take on multiple functions in the home and society. Meanwhile, women's associations have engaged in peacebuilding activities and in supporting survivors of sexual violence and abuse. Through these new roles, women have become more aware of their capacity and possible contributions to governance and are demanding greater involvement in decision-making.¹⁸

Because of the continued cycles of armed conflict, particularly in eastern Congo, the country has among the world's highest numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs). While men are more likely to be killed than women, displacement affects men and women at similar levels.¹⁹ Displaced populations are particularly vulnerable to violence against civilians, including sexual and gender-based violence. Over the years, the DRC has continued to witness a combination

14 Lusaka Agreement, 1999, <https://peacemaker.un.org/drc-lusaka-agreement99> (accessed 17 June 2024).

15 Sun City Agreement, 2003, <https://peacemaker.un.org/drc-suncity-agreement2003> (accessed 17 June 2024).

16 S/1998/581, 'Report of a UN Investigative team charged with investigating serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the Democratic Republic of the Congo committed since March 1993'.

17 Bjørkhaug, I. and Bøås, M., 'Men, women and gender-based violence in North Kivu, DRC', Fafo, 2014, p. 16.

18 Global Network of Women Peace Builders, 'SCR 1325: Civil Society Monitoring Report for DRC', 2011.

19 S/2021/987, para. 24; S/2024/251, para. 12.

of widespread violence, mass population displacement, and the systematic use of sexual violence by non-State armed groups, as well as by state security actors during and outside of military operations.²⁰

Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) has been used as a weapon of war in the DRC.²¹ CRSV has severely impacted the lives of women, girls, men and boys, and devastated entire communities across the country. It has often contributed to stereotypes and stigma against affected women by local communities, which has led to isolation or continued stigmatisation by local populations.²² Already in 2010, the UN emphasised the ‘recurrent, widespread and systematic nature of this phenomenon’.²³ Between December 2023 and January 2024 alone, the UN reported 118 registered cases of CRSV, including 87 women, 30 girls and one man. Of these, 106 were allegedly committed by armed groups.²⁴ Most of the reported cases concern women and girls; however, cases of CRSV against men have also been documented.²⁵

The number of victims and survivors of CRSV seeking services from humanitarian actors is considerably higher than the number of cases documented by MONUSCO, leading the UN to conclude that such cases likely continue to be underreported due to factors such as access and security challenges for MONUSCO, and fear of reprisals and stigma among victims and survivors.²⁶ For example, many choose to remain silent because of the potentially significant negative consequences that it can have for those who dare to speak out about sexual violence. Women risk being rejected and stigmatised by their husbands, families and communities, and the likelihood of receiving reintegration, achieving justice, related compensation or economic support is very low. Poverty remains widespread in the DRC, and the country has continued to rank very low in terms of human development indicators (ranking 175 out of 189 countries).²⁷ Access to social and health services for victims and survivors is thus limited, and people rely on family and community for support.²⁸ This lack of a safety net beyond family and community

20 S/2022/272, para. 27; S/2024/292, para. 32. Both the FARDC and PNC have used CRSV systematically as well as opportunistically. In addition to CRSV, a range of other (grave) HRVs have been committed, deliberately targeting civilians across the east. Due to FARDC and PNC involvement in HRVs, there is very little trust in these actors among the population in the east.

21 Barnwell, S., ‘Rape and sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo – a case study of gender-based violence’, *Journal of Gender Studies*, 23(1): 45-58; MADRE and SOFEPADI, ‘A Report for the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination against Women and Girls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo’, 2018, p. 8.

22 Bartels, S., Kelly, J., Scott, J., Leaning, J., Mukwege, D., Joyce, N., and Van Rooyen, M., ‘Militarized Sexual Violence in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo’, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 28(2): 340-358, 2013.

23 UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, ‘Report of the Mapping Exercise documenting the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed within the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo between March 1993 and June 2003’, 2010.

24 S/2024/251, para. 33.

25 Due to widespread underreporting, the actual scope of CRSV against women, girls, boys and men is difficult to ascertain.

26 S/2024/251, para. 33.

27 UNDP, ‘Human Development Insights’, <https://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/COD> (accessed 19 June 2023).

28 In 2018, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Dr Denis Mukwege for his work to end sexual violence and for his support to victims of sexual violence in the DRC.

further prevents victims and survivors from speaking out in fear of being left on their own.²⁹ This, in turn, has direct consequences on reporting, investigation processes and accountability.

Lack of trust in Congolese security forces further exacerbates insecurity for already vulnerable populations, such as women. While the majority of reported cases of CRSV are committed by various armed groups, Congolese security forces are also implicated. The UN has consistently and over time documented instances of the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) engaging in CRSV and other HRVs.³⁰ Violence has become closely linked to the political sphere and to political elites, as political leaders maintain armed groups to ensure political or economic survival and often use FARDC for their personal benefit.³¹ The systemic involvement in a range of HRVs has undermined the credibility of the FARDC in the eyes of citizens. In 2009, President Kabila announced a zero-tolerance policy for the FARDC and the Police Nationale Congolaise (Congolese National Police or PNC) concerning discipline violations and HRVs, including sexual and gender-based violence.³² Despite extensive support and training, security forces still commit grave HRVs against women, girls, men and boys.³³

3.2. Governance and efforts to address gender inequality

Despite variations depending on region and ethnic affinities, patriarchal norms in which men are the breadwinners of the family and a woman's status depends on being married tend to dominate gender relations in the DRC.³⁴ Approximately 52% of women in DRC are domestic violence survivors.³⁵ DRC ranks at 152 out of 166 on the Gender Inequality Index (GII)³⁶ and

29 TRIAL International, 'Sexual Violence: Stigma at all Levels', 11 May 2020, <https://trialinternational.org/latest-post/sexual-violence-stigma-at-all-levels> (accessed 18 June 2024); Human Rights Watch, 'The War Within the War: Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in Eastern Congo', June 2002, p. 20, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/drc> (accessed 18 June 2024).

30 A/HRC/30/32; S/2022/272; S/2024/251.

31 Hoebeker, H., Boshoff, H., and Vlassenroot, K., "Monsieur le President, vous n'avez pas d'armée. . .": La reforme du secteur de sécurité vue du Kivu', In: *Réforme au Congo (RDC): Attentes et désillusions*, edited by T. Trefon. Paris: Cahiers Africains, 2009, pp. 119–139.

32 US State Department Archives, '2009 Human Right Report: DRC', 2009, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/af/135947.htm> (accessed 10 September 2021).

33 Solhjell, R., 'Gendering the Security Sector: Protecting Civilians Against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo', NUPI working paper 769, 2010.

34 Human Rights Watch, 'The War Within the War: Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in Eastern Congo', June 2002, p. 20, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/drc> (accessed 18 June 2024); Bjørkhaug and Bøås, 'Men, women and gender-based violence in North Kivu, DRC', op. cit., p. 16.

35 UN Women, 'Democratic Republic of Congo', <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/west-and-central-africa/democratic-republic-of-congo> (accessed 29 August 2024).

36 GII is a composite metric of gender inequality using three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and the labour market. A low GII value indicates low inequality between women and men, and vice versa. UNDP, *Human Development Report 2023–2024*, <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2023-24-reporten.pdf> (accessed 29 August 2024).

at 174 out of 177 on the annual WPS Index,³⁷ and is frequently featured in the UN Secretary-General's reports on CRSV.

Legal and political reforms to address gender inequality have taken place, although these have had a limited impact on the day-to-day lives of most Congolese women. The DRC has ratified various regional and international women's rights legal frameworks, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Article 14 of the 2006 Constitution guarantees women significant representation in national, provincial and local institutions, and Article 15 places the responsibility for the elimination of sexual violence used as an instrument in the destabilisation and displacement of families with the public authorities.³⁸ Additional legal reforms took place with the introduction of the Law on Parity in 2015, which addresses women's political, social, health, education and economic rights and participation, and an amendment to the family Code in 2016, which removed the need for women to obtain their husband's authorisation to sign contracts, start a job or register a business.³⁹

While Article 14 and 15 of the Constitution provide a framework for promoting gender equality through legislation, national legislation remains contradictory and discriminatory towards women in other aspects, such as inheritance rights for women⁴⁰ as well as the revised Family Code, in which the husband remains the head of the household and administers all marital property, including the wife's property.

The country has further adopted several relevant policies, programmes and strategies relating to gender equality, including the National Gender Policy (2009), the National Strategy to combat gender-based violence (2009), and the Action Plan for FARDC to combat sexual violence. In 2010, the DRC adopted its first National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on WPS, which aimed at achieving ambitious goals but lacked crucial protection mechanisms for women. A second NAP was developed for the period 2019 to 2022, pursuing 11 specific objectives across four axes: Inclusion, prevention, protection and recovery.⁴¹

Similar to legal reforms, these policies also suffer from implementation challenges. When it comes to the NAP, this relates to centre/periphery dynamics and challenges, including the Government's focus on the capital, but more importantly, the willingness of successive

37 Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, and Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), 'Women Peace and Security Index 2023/24', 2023, <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/WPS-Index-full-report.pdf> (accessed 29 August 2024).

38 DRC Constitution, Article 14, available at: <https://wipolex.wipo.int/en/text/315718>.

39 Braunmiller, J.C., and Dry, M., 'Reforms to Enhance Gender Equality in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: From Advocacy to Implementation', Global Indicator's Brief No. 4, 2022, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/857041647271462384/pdf/Reforms-to-Enhance-Gender-Equality-in-the-Democratic-Republic-of-Congo-From-Advocacy-to-Implementation.pdf> (accessed 20 June 2024).

40 'National report of the Congo on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women submitted to UN', ECOSOC (E/2010/78).

41 Unofficial translation, funded by ARC DP160100212. <http://1325naps.peacewomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/DRC-NAP-2019.pdf>.

governments to implement the NAPs in a systematic manner. The third NAP is currently being developed by the government, with support from MONUSCO and UN Women. Recommendations for the third NAP emerged during a series of workshops organised by MONUSCO, including an increase in women's participation in decision-making through compulsory legislative measures, quotas, and the development of a database of qualified women.⁴²

Congolese women and women's organisations have mobilised to be included in peace negotiations since the outbreak of conflict. While they were practically excluded from the negotiations leading up to the 1999 Lusaka Agreement, their participation was a little higher in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue in Sun City in 2002. With support from the international community, 40 women were allowed to participate in the formal peace negotiations, where they left a significant mark on the process. However, when follow-up meetings were held in Pretoria, South Africa, in November and December 2002, only ten women attended.⁴³

When it comes to women's participation in governance and politics, despite a gradual increase over time since 2003, women's representation in the National assembly and Senate peaked at 13% and 16% in 2019, respectively. Faced with significant impediments during the elections in December 2023, women currently hold 13% of the seats in the National Assembly and 16% in the Senate.⁴⁴ Women's representation in the government has fluctuated in a similar way: We saw an increase from 17% to 27% in 2021, while 21% of ministers were women as of 1 January 2023.⁴⁵ In June 2024, the number of women ministers had increased to 31.5%, including the DRC's first female Prime Minister.⁴⁶

3.3. UN Peacekeeping in the DRC

In November 1999, the UNSC mandated MONUC under Resolution 1279 to oversee the 1999 ceasefire. Resolution 1279 did not mention the disproportionate effects of violence on women and vulnerable groups, nor did it emphasise the need to address the gendered impacts of the conflict. MONUC initially had a force of 400 military and non-military personnel monitoring and reporting on the ceasefire. This was later increased to 5 000 troops. In 2000, the UNSC

42 S/2024/251, para. 56.

43 Selimovic, J., Brandt, Å.N., and Jacobson, A.S., *Equal Power – Lasting Peace. The Democratic Republic of Congo. No Peace for Women*. Stockholm: Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, 2012, p. 6; Mpoumou, D. 'Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Discourse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo', International IDEA, 2004, p. 121.

44 IPU Parline, 'Global Data on National Parliaments, Democratic Republic of Congo', 2024, Geneva, <https://data.ipu.org/parliament/CD/CD-LC01> (accessed 23 August 2024).

45 UN Women, 'Local government country profile', <https://localgov.unwomen.org/country/COD> (data as of 13 June 2023, accessed 20 June 2024).

46 S/2024/482, para. 2.

authorised MONUC under Chapter VII of the UN Charter⁴⁷ to protect its bases and properties through Resolution 1291 (2000).⁴⁸ Resolution 1355 (2001) mandated MONUC to assist in voluntary disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) processes of armed elements. Notably, this was the first resolution that included a gender-sensitive provision, which was directed at the parties to the conflict to ensure that child protection concerns were addressed in national, bilateral and regional dialogues, including ‘the plight of girls affected by conflict’.⁴⁹ In 2006, MONUC was mandated to provide support for the political transition during DRC’s first democratic elections in 40 years under Resolution 1635 (2005).

Between 2008 and 2009, President Joseph Kabila pushed for MONUC to begin plans for drawing down the mission and its closure by 2011.⁵⁰ The UNSC decided to adjust the mandate, decrease the number of forces by 2 000 troops to a maximum of 19 815 military personnel, and rename the mission MONUSCO. Resolution 1925 (2010) still authorised the mission under Chapter VII and retained a focus on PoC. This included violations of international humanitarian law, HRVs and abuses, and all forms of sexual and gender-based violence. Under Resolution 2098 (2013), the UNSC established the Intervention Brigade within MONUSCO, as part of a mission-wide effort to confront violence and armed groups in Eastern DRC.⁵¹ Furthermore, the resolution highlighted reducing violence against civilians, including sexual and gender-based violence and violence against children. Later mandate configurations continued to feature similar measures, focusing on protecting civilians, building sustainable institutions of governance, and promoting State authority.⁵² As a result, MONUSCO’s mandate evolved to include strong language on stabilising the country and some gendered approaches to conflict, including provisions such as preventing and responding to violence against women, support for policy implementation, conduct and discipline, as well as provision of resources and (enabling) women’s participation (see 3.1).⁵³

The security environment has been characterised by hundreds of armed groups, as well as the FARDC and the PNC, committing grave human rights abuses, including large-scale

47 Chapter VII refers to ‘Action with Respect to the Threats to the Peace’ and includes enforcement actions under the UN Charter. In the context of UN peacekeeping, this provides the mission with more flexibility to use force compared to a Chapter VI mission, but still requires compliance with the three principles of UN peacekeeping, namely, consent of the parties, impartiality, and non-use of force except in self-defence or defence of the mandate. See: UNPOL, ‘UN Peace Operations: Principles and Guidelines (‘Capstone doctrine’), <https://police.un.org/en/united-nations-peace-operations-principles-and-guidelines-capstone-doctrine> (accessed 23 August 2024).

48 Vogel, C., ‘After UN-Kinshasa Fallout, Operations against FDLR Begin in Eastern DRC’, African Arguments, 2 March 2015, <https://africanarguments.org/2015/03/after-un-kinshasa-fallout-operations-against-fdlr-begin-in-eastern-drc-by-christoph-vogel/> (accessed 18 June 2024).

49 See: S/RES/1355 (2001), para. 14.

50 Open Society Initiative for West Africa et al., ‘The Democratic Republic of Congo: Taking a Stand on Security Sector Reform’, 2012, p. 7.

51 UN Meetings Coverage, ‘Intervention Brigade’ Authorised as Security Council Grants Mandate Renewal for United Nations Mission in Democratic Republic of Congo’, 28 March 2013, <https://press.un.org/en/2013/sc10964.doc.htm> (accessed 18 June 2024).

52 The Government had the primary responsibility to protect civilians, but MONUSCO had an important support role to play, covering critical gaps remaining in the national security framework.

53 S/RES/1925; S/RES/2053; S/RES/2147; S/RES/2409; S/RES/2502.

extrajudicial killings and sexual violence (especially in eastern DRC).⁵⁴ This would lead to growing perceptions on the side of civilians and through the use of political rhetoric by state entities that MONUSCO was not adequately contributing to improving the security situation and protecting civilians, despite ongoing efforts by the mission to intervene.

UNSC Resolution 2556 (2020) requested the development of a Joint Transition Plan, in partnership with the Government and the UN country team on the basis of the Joint Strategy on the Progressive and Phased Drawdown of MONUSCO (S/2020/1041). This work began in 2020 and 2021. Then, at the request of the DRC Government, and following violent anti-MONUSCO protests in a context of heightened political tensions in a pre-electoral environment, a Joint Transition Plan was drafted by the UN (MONUSCO and UN country team) and the Congolese government in consultation with civil society in 2023. Resolution 2717 (2023) requested MONUSCO to withdraw from South Kivu by June 2024 and called on all parties to cooperate fully with the mission during its gradual, responsible, sustainable withdrawal from the DRC.⁵⁵ Since November 2021, the security situation in Eastern DRC has become more complex with the resumption of the March 23 Movement (M23) activities, which prompted regional initiatives, including the deployment of the East African Community Regional Force (EACRF), followed by the Southern African Development Community Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC). In August 2024, the Council mandated MONUSCO to provide limited logistical support to SAMIDRC within the parameters set by Resolution 2746.⁵⁶

In February 2024, MONUSCO consisted of 17 761 personnel, including 12 385 military troops. Since the mission's establishment, 275 peacekeepers have been killed in action, and the mission has become one of the most expensive UN missions at an annual cost of USD 1 123 346 000 dollars in 2022.⁵⁷ Yet, with MONUSCO gradually drawing down its presence, the DRC still has one of the largest internally displaced populations in the world and is experiencing high levels of violence against civilians. As of June 2024, the UN reported that more than 7.3 million IDPs throughout the country, with about 90% (6.6 million) of IDPs in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces. This represents an increase of 1.2 million people compared with the same period in 2023.⁵⁸ In addition, the country is host to more than 500 000 refugees.⁵⁹

54 Human rights abuses by the FARDC and PNC have provided ongoing challenges for MONUSCO in assessing efforts to undertake joint operations as part of its mandate, with a need to apply the UN's Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDPP) stringently.

55 UN Security Council Report, 'Democratic Republic of the Congo', 31 August 2023, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2023-09/democratic-republic-of-the-congo-22.php> (accessed 18 June 2024).

56 S/RES/2746 (2024). Resolution 2746 includes provisions for MONUSCO to support SAMIDRC through the provision of 'technical advice and support on the protection of civilians, including women and girls, child protection, the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence'.

57 UN Peacekeeping, 'MONUSCO fact sheet', 2024, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/monusco> (accessed 12 June 2024).

58 S/2024/482, para. 30.

59 UN Human Rights Council, 'The Democratic Republic of the Congo: Refugee Policy Review Framework Country Summary as of 30 June 2023', <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/democratic-republic-congo-refugee-policy-review-framework-country-summary-30-june-2023-update-summary-30-june-2023> (accessed 23 August 2024).

Between 20 March and 19 June 2024, the UN recorded that 562 civilians were killed, including 141 women and 38 children, a slight increase from the previous reporting period.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ S/2024/251, para. 12; S/2024/482, para. 8.



Goma, North Kivu, D.R. Congo – 17 September 2024: The UN Police (UNPOL) Sector Chief of Goma, other colleagues accompanied the Senegalese Formed Police Unit and the Congolese national Police as they carried out a patrol around the city of Goma. These patrols are carried out regularly to help ensure protection of civilians. During the patrol, the police stopped in several locations and shared with the population information on a toll-free emergency number that anyone can use to contact the police for urgent assistance. (Photo: MONUSCO)

4. WPS Language in MONUSCO Mandates

Today, references and provisions related to the WPS agenda are frequently included as standard language in the mandates of UN peace operations. UNSC members have sought to provide greater accountability on advancing WPS, albeit not always accompanied by the allocation of adequate resources to support missions in line with the mandate. Since 2015, the UNSC has signalled an elevation in the priority of WPS references. Despite this, we saw a minor overall decrease in UNSC resolutions with WPS references between 2015 and 2021, and resolutions addressing country-specific situations were the least likely to contain WPS references. While references to women's agency (the participation pillar) have increased in UNSC resolutions overall, emphasis largely remains on improving women's security (the protection and prevention pillars).⁶¹

UNSC members have sought to provide greater accountability on advancing WPS, albeit not always accompanied by the allocation of adequate resources to support missions in line with the mandate.

This section analyses the WPS dimensions of MONUSCO's mandate through the UNSC resolutions. Through an analysis of the mandate resolution texts, we identify trends over time, key themes, targeted actors (i.e., whom the mandate is addressing with specific provisions), and

⁶¹ Chang, P. and Olsson, L., 'Women, Peace and Security in Decisions on International Peace and Security', GPS Policy Brief No. 2, 2023, PRIO.

provision orientation (i.e., whether directed to the peacekeeping mission itself or to affect the situation in its area of operation) in the mandate resolution texts from Resolution 1925 (2010) to Resolution 2612 (2021).⁶²

When MONUSCO took over from MONUC in July 2010, the initial mandate provisions on WPS were mainly concentrated on protection measures for women and children (apart from a standard reference to Resolution 1325). The primary consideration was to end violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, to fight impunity and bring the perpetrators to justice, and to provide assistance to victims and survivors, including those of sexual and gender-based violence. Continued cooperation between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC) and the Government of the DRC was encouraged, and the full compliance of MONUSCO with the UN zero-tolerance policy on SEA was emphasised.⁶³ There were no references to women's participation, gender considerations, or engagement with women's organisations and civil society in the initial MONUSCO mandate resolution.

Early mandate resolutions focused on addressing women's protection concerns and efforts to prevent and respond to CRSV. More recently, language on WPS encourages women's participation in conflict prevention efforts and emphasises women's increased, equal and meaningful participation in peace and security processes.

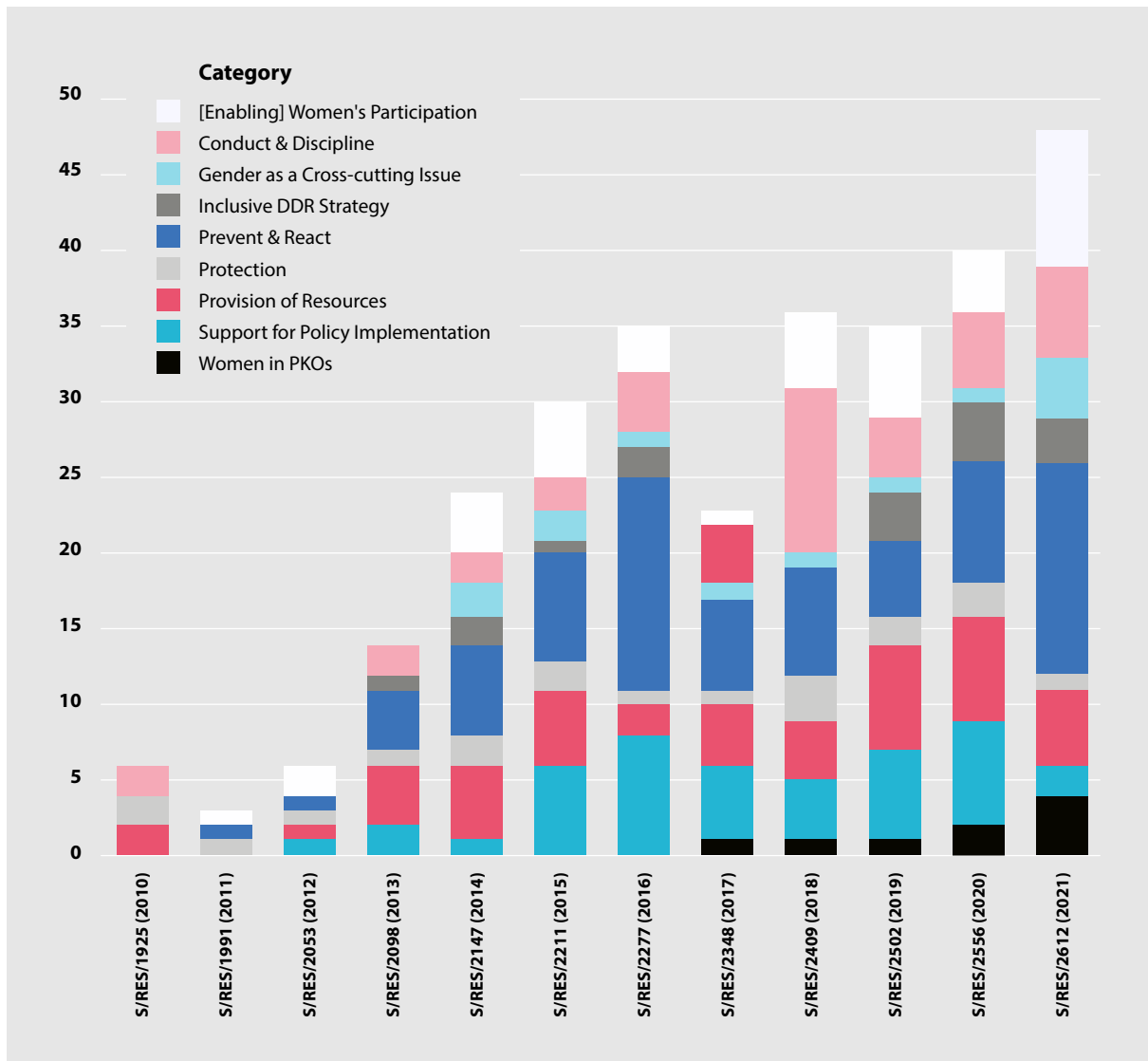
However, the WPS provisions of the mandate changed together with the situation on the ground, and from 2013 onwards, references to WPS in the mandate texts increased, with the highest number of references recorded in 2021 (Figure 1). From 2015 to 2021, the references remain on a stable level, except in 2017, when the number of WPS references was lower than in the preceding and following years. The increased inclusion of WPS language has provided

62 For each mention of women/gender in the mandate texts, there is an observation in the dataset. If a single phrase or reference serves two purposes (e.g., women should be protected and their participation in politics should be facilitated), it was coded twice. The dataset thus consists in a catalogue of all references made by the UNSC to women/gender as they relate to MONUSCO's operations and objectives, which actors are targeted with responsibilities by the reference, and what types of actions or activities are addressed or assigned. Each reference was then assigned to at least one sub-category. These were then grouped according to emergent themes into nine broader categories (see below). Some of these correspond with the four pillars of the WPS agenda, while others are a function of the prevalence of them, as they are addressed in the resolutions containing MONUSCO's mandates over time.

63 As a result of the conflict and the large presence of foreign forces and personnel, issues of SEA, including allegations against UN peacekeepers, are not only among the most critical challenges facing the performance of peacekeeping missions but also constitute gendered impacts of conflict. In the DRC, peacekeepers and civilian personnel within MONUSCO have been accused of committing SEA. See: MONUSCO, 'Peacekeeping Initiatives in Action: Addressing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse', 2017.

MONUSCO with an opportunity to advance women, peace, and security in its area of operations and as a core part of its peacekeeping mandate.

Figure 1: WPS language in MONUSCO mandate resolutions (2010-2021)



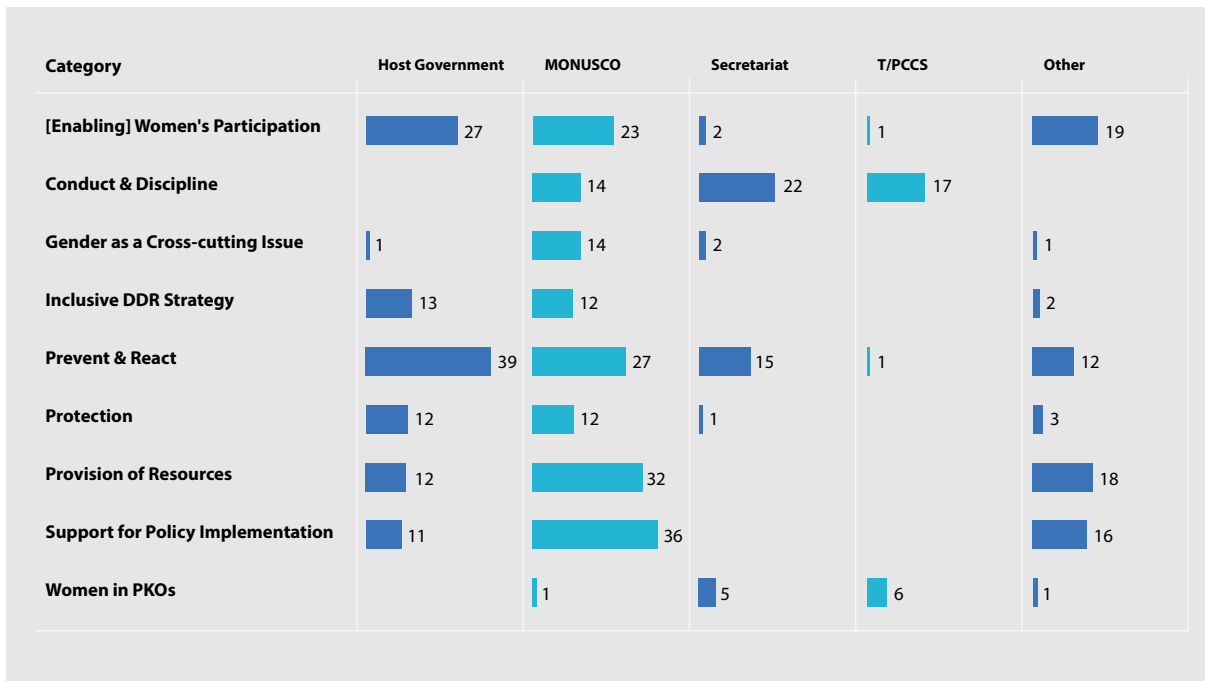
Source: The dataset consists of 12 mandate resolutions adopted by the UNSC for MONUSCO (UNSCR 1925 (2010) to 2612 (2021)).

Looking at the key themes and categories that emerged from the analysis of MONUSCO mandates, we can see that thematically, there has been an emphasis on preventing and responding to violence against women, support for policy implementation, conduct and discipline, as well as provision of resources and (enabling) women’s participation. Early mandate resolutions focused on addressing women’s protection concerns and efforts to prevent and respond to CRSV. More recently, language on WPS encourages women’s participation in conflict prevention efforts and emphasises women’s increased, equal and meaningful participation in peace and security processes. A great deal of attention has also been given to conduct and

discipline in an effort to ‘do no harm’ where the mission is deployed, as well as providing support to the Congolese Government in the implementation of its various gender policies and provisions (see also figure 3). The quantitative and qualitative expansion of WPS language in MONUSCO’s mandates in the period under study somewhat contrasts with general developments across peacekeeping mission mandates in the same period. We observe a steady increase in WPS language in MONUSCO mandates even between 2015 and 2021, with 2017 being an aberration that is compensated for by an increase in subsequent years.

Figure 2 shows the number of references targeting the Government, MONUSCO, T/PCCs and other actors. Highlighting which actors are targeted by the language in the mandates reflects how the mission is also reliant on a range of other national government stakeholders and partners to implement the WPS aspects of its mandate, with many provisions of the mandate directed not only at the mission, but also the Government, the Secretariat, and T/PCCs. The political commitment and cooperation of these partners, such as the Government, can also impact the mission’s ability to implement aspects of the WPS mandate and influence the gendered conflict dynamics.

Figure 2: Frequency of language by category and target (2010-2021)



Source: The dataset consists of 12 mandate resolutions adopted by the UNSC for MONUSCO (UNSCR 1925 (2010) to 2612 (2021)).

WPS language in peace operations’ mandates can further be seen as directed internally or externally to the mission. Internal provisions are connected to the peacekeeping mission itself, including *increasing the participation of women peacekeepers, prevention of SEA by peacekeeping personnel, integration of gender considerations, and enhanced reporting on gender issues*. External provisions

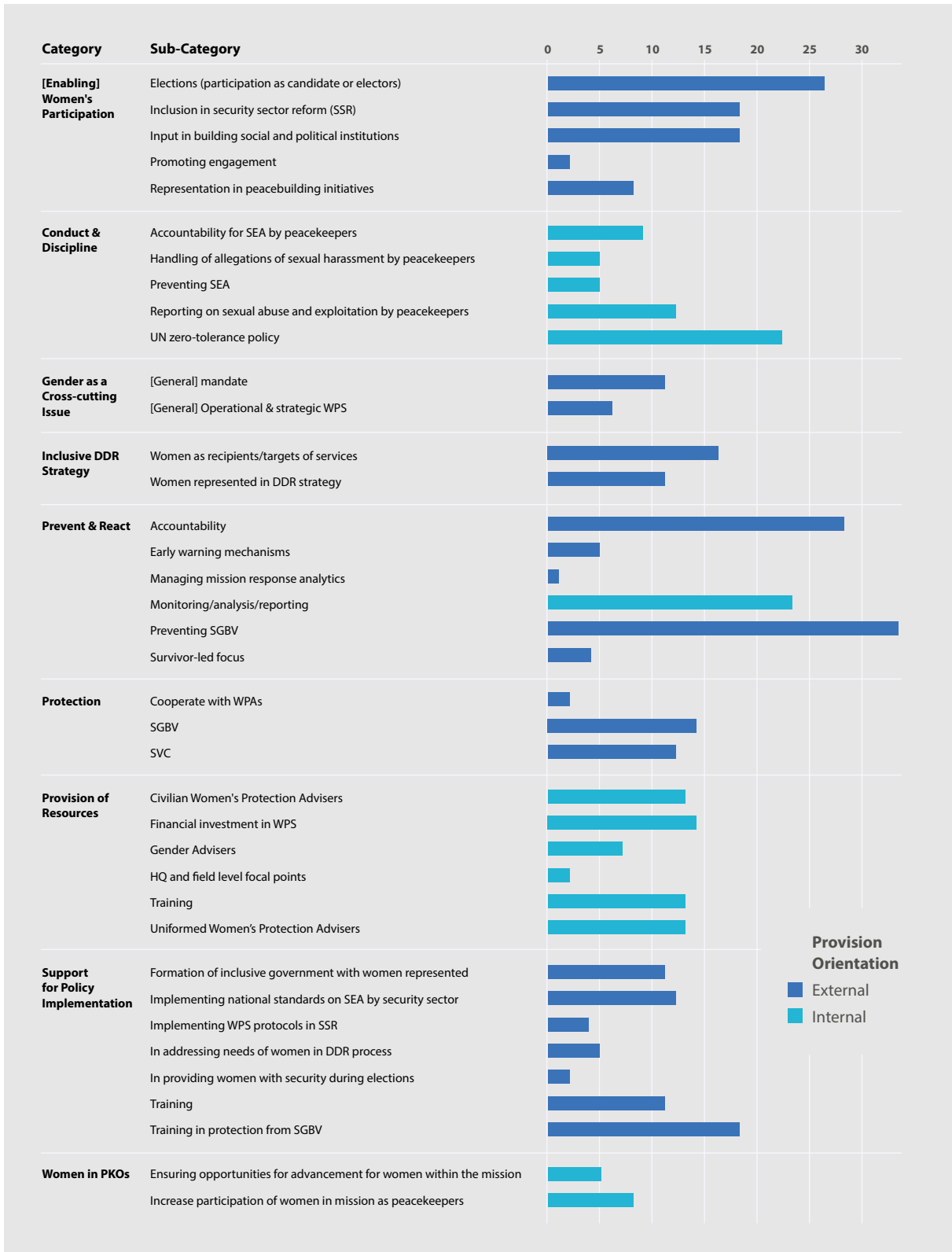
aim to affect the situation for women and girls (and men and boys) in the area of operation, such as the *protection of women from physical violence and human rights abuses (including sexual and gender-based violence), the meaningful participation of women in political processes and security institutions, and gender as a cross-cutting issue.*⁶⁴

Mapping WPS language reveals a complex web of relationships between various peacekeeping objectives. While the language used in the resolutions does broadly reflect an appreciation for and incorporation of the four pillars of WPS into resolutions, it also highlights other areas and issues that are forced to the surface when WPS is being operationalised in peacekeeping mandates in complex environments.

Figure 3 displays the frequency of WPS language by sub-category and provision orientation. A majority of the WPS language references are external provisions aiming to affect the situation for women and girls (and men and boys) in MONUSCO's area of operation. 23 sub-categories (containing 280 provisions) have been coded as externally oriented, including those under the main categories Enabling women's participation, Gender as a cross-cutting issue, Inclusive DDR Strategy, Prevent and React (except the sub-category on Monitoring and reporting), Protection, and Support for Policy Implementation (except the sub-category on training). 15 sub-categories (containing 162 provisions) were coded as internally oriented and connected to the peacekeeping mission itself. In addition to the sub-categories already mentioned, this includes those under the main categories Women in Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs), Conduct & Discipline, and Provision of Resources.

64 Sharland, 'Women, Peace and Security Mandates for UN peacekeeping Operations', op. cit.

Figure 3: Frequency of language by sub-sector and provision orientation (2010-2021)



Source: The dataset consists of 12 mandate resolutions adopted by the UNSC for MONUSCO (UNSCR 1925 (2010) to 2612 (2021)).

Mapping WPS language reveals a complex web of relationships between various peacekeeping objectives. While the language used in the resolutions does broadly reflect an appreciation for and incorporation of the four pillars of WPS into resolutions, it also highlights other areas and issues that are forced to the surface when WPS is being operationalised in peacekeeping mandates in complex environments. These include questions of capacity and resourcing (without which the weight of relevant language would depreciate), the different types of violence women might experience, the different roles that women might hold in and beyond the mission, the different actors upon whose cooperation and successful implementation depends (e.g., government or Secretariat), as well as the capacity for protection and violence that each individual peacekeeper has (e.g., conduct and discipline). This can perhaps be interpreted as evidence of the efficacy of gender mainstreaming objectives, i.e., the weaving of gender sensitivities and responsiveness throughout otherwise distinct operational tasks.



*Kinshasa: Presentation of Human Rights Prize awarded to Ms. Julienne Lusenge to the MONUSCO Human Rights Team.
(Photo: MONUSCO / Jean-Claude Wenga)*

5. Analysis and Findings

Reflecting on the different trends, themes and priorities in MONUSCO’s mandate identified in this report, this section draws on an analysis of documents and interviews with mission personnel to explore how the mission has implemented the WPS elements of its mandate and assess the different factors that have had an impact on the ability of the mission to do so. Drawing on the explanatory factors from the EPON methodology, the report focuses on four factors:

- 1. the alignment between the mandate, resources and mission culture;
- 2. the priority attached to strengthening women’s participation within the mission and throughout the security and political institutions across the DRC;
- 3. how effectively the mission works to address gendered assumptions in their area of operations and responds in a gender-sensitive manner to different security and protection concerns; and
- 4. the degree to which the mission’s engagement activities are focused on people-centred approaches that respond to the different needs and security perceptions of a diverse range of communities and groups within the population.

5.1. Matching mandates and resources

As shown in the analysis of mandate resolution texts, the WPS elements in MONUSCO’s mandate have evolved, grown and adapted between 2010 and 2021. This has been in response

to normative developments, political support within the Security Council, and needs on the ground and in the mission. The inclusion of this language has provided MONUSCO with broad parameters to advance WPS in its area of operations and as a core part of its peacekeeping mandate. However, the mission has not always had the resources necessary to match international and local expectations relating to advancing women's participation and protection within the DRC. Similarly, the mission is reliant on national and local government stakeholders to advance WPS within the country, in addition to other partners such as regional organisations, UN agencies, funds and programmes, and T/PCCs (in generating and deploying their personnel). Part of the ongoing challenge for MONUSCO – like other multidimensional peacekeeping missions – has been its ability to mobilise and influence those actors to fulfil and implement the mandate provided by the Security Council. The role and support of these entities in advancing WPS has come into even greater focus with MONUSCO's transition and drawdown.

To assess the extent to which MONUSCO has had realistic WPS mandates matched by the necessary resources, this section analyses three of the tools and mechanisms that the mission draws on to integrate gender into its work: deployment of gender expertise within the mission; the utilisation of personnel (uniformed and civilian) across the mission and programmatic funds to engage with women networks and critical stakeholders (including engagement teams); and accountability mechanisms, including the gender scorecard (see Box 1).

5.1.1. Leveraging limited gender resources within the mission

MONUSCO has a gender affairs unit headed by a senior gender advisor, though efforts to implement WPS in the mission are shared and viewed as a whole-of-mission responsibility. This is reflected in innovative approaches to develop accountability mechanisms and tools to assess how different sections were following through on their responsibilities to implement WPS.

At the time of interviews in 2021, the gender affairs unit had 13 UN personnel (including internationals, nationals and UN volunteers), both in headquarters and field offices.⁶⁵ Some of those personnel were double hatted in other roles and functions. The unit was headed by a senior gender advisor who reported directly to the mission leadership and worked closely with different components across the mission. The work of the gender affairs unit within MONUSCO focused on three areas: gender mainstreaming and accountability, gender parity across within the mission, and advancing women's political participation.⁶⁶

65 The mission had maintained 16 approved posts in the gender affairs unit from 2021 to 2024, which has included three international staff (with a senior gender advisor at the P5 level), six national staff, and seven UNVs. See: UN General Assembly, *Budget for the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the period from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025 – Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/78/741, 29 January 2024, p. 17.

66 These were framed as three priorities during interviews in 2021. However, it has also been framed as four priorities: accountability, knowledge transfer, parity, and women's political participation. These broadly align with the same areas of priority. See: MONUSCO, 'Gender, Mandates and Objectives', <https://monusco.unmissions.org/en/mandates-and-objectives> (accessed 28 September 2024).

On the first focus area of ensuring gender mainstreaming and knowledge transfer across the mission, the unit supported induction training and refresher courses, conducted training of the trainers (including to support the FARDC and PNC), tracked implementation of DPO indicators on WPS across the mission, and coordinated reporting on WPS. In addition to the gender affairs unit, there were approximately 30 gender focal points across the mission working in different substantive sections (e.g., PoC, DDR) both at headquarters and field offices, as well as gender advisors serving in military and police components. Second, the gender affairs unit supported the mission leadership's efforts to achieve gender parity in recruitment and advancement within the mission.⁶⁷ This included through the implementation of the mission's gender parity strategy. And third, the gender affairs unit worked with political affairs and other mission sections to further women's participation through local conflict resolution and atrocity prevention, working with local political leaders and youth, promoting women's engagement in peace processes and political life, and mapping risks to women, particularly in electoral contexts.

The gender affairs unit in MONUSCO supported a decentralised approach to WPS with the team serving as a technical, advisory and collaborative lead across the mission. This meant the unit had a significant *internal* focus on building capacity across the mission when it came to gender-responsiveness, both for the civilian component and troop and police contributors. According to some interviewees, there was a view that about 80% of the gender affairs unit's efforts were focused on this internal support, with only 20% of its activities focused on direct external engagement. As a result of this, the gender affairs unit was perceived to have a limited role in directly engaging with external stakeholders on WPS, relying heavily on other substantive units or functional roles (i.e., civil affairs, political affairs, women protection advisors) to engage directly with local women and civil society organisations. One notable area where the gender affairs unit has been externally engaged is related to ongoing peace processes.

In effect, the gender affairs unit supported other sections to take a gender-sensitive approach to their work and relied on those units to engage them as an advisory service regarding their work, but this did not always happen consistently. Furthermore, dedicated funds were not always available to support the work on WPS. The gender affairs unit is considered the second line – not the frontline – and they are understood as being there to 'consult and collaborate'.⁶⁸ This meant there were not enough resources to ensure that gender is a key part of all projects, so for those sections that do not reach out, they settle for the bare minimum in assessing the work (e.g., the number of women potentially impacted).⁶⁹ This approach also meant there was a heavy reliance on the contribution of gender focal points. This could be problematic due to the high rotation of gender focal points, which affects continuity. Furthermore, some interviewees expressed concerns about a low level of awareness regarding the role of gender focal points and inadequate support from some managers.⁷⁰

67 Interview A3 (DRC-CIV).

68 Interview A3 (DRC-CIV).

69 Interview A3 (DRC-CIV).

70 Interview A3 (DRC-CIV).

5.1.2. Engaging local women on their protection concerns: the force component and engagement teams

Efforts to engage women on their protection concerns are undertaken by a range of sections within MONUSCO, including civilians (e.g., civil affairs, women protection advisors, community liaison assistance) and uniformed components. Functions in support of engagement include early warning and mapping of threats, and advocacy within the mission to mobilise responses to potential threats.

Peacekeeping missions have increasingly relied on the presence of female peacekeepers to engage with women about threats to their security, or in cases where there has been CRSV. While women may not have inherently more knowledge on these issues, there is an operating assumption that they will have access to affected communities. For these reasons, missions such as MONUSCO have encouraged the deployment of female engagement teams or mixed engagement teams to support their work.⁷¹ Indeed, MONUSCO has led the way with the use of engagement teams since 2015⁷² and, in 2021, developed a practice note highlighting best practices and offering recommendations to integrate the work of engagement teams into the WPS work of the mission.⁷³

Peacekeeping missions have increasingly relied on the presence of female peacekeepers to engage with women about threats to their security, or in cases where there has been CRSV. While women may not have inherently more knowledge on these issues, there is an operating assumption that they will have access to affected communities.

In the case of MONUSCO, engagement teams have undertaken a range of roles that have supported the implementation of the mission's WPS mandate. For example, a Nepalese engagement team was deployed alongside the FARDC as part of joint patrols, resulting in intelligence to inform patrol routes.⁷⁴ Engagement teams have also enabled women to participate in local dialogues in Goma by providing security for Local Protection Committee meetings,

71 Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC), 'We Have to Try to Break the Silence Somehow': Preventing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence through UN Peacekeeping', October 2020. This approach has now changed to Engagement Platoons and Teams, which are expected to have a 50/50 composition.

72 Baldwin, G., 'From Female Engagement Teams to Engagement Platoons: The Evolution of Gendered Community Engagement in UN Peace Operations', International Peace Institute, November 2021.

73 MONUSCO, 'MONUSCO's Engagement Teams: Promoting Women, Peace and Security Mandate', Practice Note, February 2021.

74 Ibid, p. 3.

and encouraged improved understanding of the needs of internally displaced women and girls in Bunia. Such teams ‘provide a unique channel to communicate with Congolese women and identify high-risk areas for conflict-related sexual violence such as water collection points, agricultural areas, markets and forests; especially after nightfall’.⁷⁵ However, their deployment has not been without challenges in MONUSCO, pointing to a deficit in the mission’s capabilities, i.e., the extent to which it had access to the ‘right’ sufficiently trained personnel, material, resources and skills.

Engagement teams do not have clear lines of reporting or communication to liaise with Force Gender and Protection Focal Points or the Force Gender Adviser. This may diminish coordinated planning and the ability of the engagement teams to be utilised in a manner that enhances operational effectiveness.

One of these challenges is related to the command structure within the military component of the mission. Engagement teams do not have clear lines of reporting or communication to liaise with Force Gender and Protection Focal Points or the Force Gender Adviser. This may diminish coordinated planning and the ability of the engagement teams to be utilised in a manner that enhances operational effectiveness.⁷⁶ This possibly affects the reliability of the information available to the mission and hinders the ability of engagement teams to be utilised in a more systematic manner to address the gendered dimensions of conflict. Based on its experiences with engagement teams, some MONUSCO personnel recommended, for example, that these should be firmly embedded in the Force and Mission coordination structure as well as in the units they deploy with, and that they should be under the direct command of the Sector Focal Point and Battalion HQ.⁷⁷

This lack of effectiveness is compounded by a lack of female Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs) despite the mission’s efforts. CLAs work alongside military units and often reside on bases with them, particularly in remote locations. The majority of CLAs tend to be male rather than female due to a lack of access to education or prior employment (compared to male counterparts) as well as the living conditions on bases. Furthermore, some contingents (particularly those that are predominantly male) can have different attitudes towards the inclusion of CLAs.⁷⁸ The lack of women CLAs can limit the ability of different units to engage directly with

⁷⁵ Ibid, pp. 3, 10.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 17.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 21.

⁷⁸ UN Peacekeeping, *Community Liaison Assistants in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, Survey of Practice, November 2016, p. 12.

large parts of the population. Similarly, most military contingents rely on language assistants to engage with the local population when they require language assistance. However, for similar reasons, many of these language assistants are mostly men. Consequently, parts of the Force struggle to engage with local women (and men) as they are unable to communicate effectively with the community while on patrols or when projecting force in remote locations, even when women are present in the Force.⁷⁹ This also speaks to a recruitment challenge and the need for the mission to be better at supporting women and ensuring they have adequate accommodation and an inclusive mission environment, in addition to training more women in this area.

5.1.3. Developing a culture of leadership and accountability

With a decentralised approach to implementing WPS, accountability is shared across the mission. According to one interviewee, leadership wanted the mission to do more so that all sections and units would be at the same level of gender integration.⁸⁰ One of the approaches that MONUSCO has taken to encourage accountability and leadership on WPS is the development of a gender scorecard (see Box 1). The gender scorecard seeks to assess how different sections within the mission are tracking their efforts to integrate gender-sensitive analysis into their work. According to mission leadership, the scorecard has shown ‘we have come from a mission that was gender-blind, to a mission that is no longer gender-blind, because there is no zero score’.⁸¹ However, as described in Box 1, that progress has not been consistent across all the sections in the mission. Nonetheless, the scorecard enables the gender affairs unit in the mission to assess which sections need greater support and to target their engagement further internally.

Box 1 – MONUSCO’s Gender Scorecard⁸²

MONUSCO’s gender scorecard is an innovation in the mission which provides analysis of the implementation of gender integration by different thematic sections. Rating is based on the gender responsiveness of different sections. It is measured on a seven-point scale between 0 and 2, with 0 meaning a section ignores gender entirely, 1 meaning it makes efforts to integrate gender, and 2 meaning it strongly integrates gender.

In 2021, the mission assessed its overall efforts at a score of 1, noting that while many sections considered gender, the mission itself was still not gender-responsive across all sections and activities. The Child Protection Section, Civil Affairs Section, and UN Police (UNPOL) were rated most highly in terms of strongly integrating gender into their work from 2018 to 2021.

79 Interview A2 (DRC-CIV).

80 Interview A3 (DRC-CIV).

81 Interview A19 (DRC-CIV).

82 MONUSCO, ‘MONUSCO Gender Markers – Review of gender responsiveness in the Mission 2020–2021 cycle’.

The Offices of the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DRSSG) (Integrated Office and Operations), Director: Mission Support, Office of the UN Volunteers (UNVs), Stabilisation Support Unit, Joint Mission Analysis Centre (JMAC), Office of the Chief of Staff, and Public Information Division in the mission were rated as ‘poor achievers’ in 2021.

More recently, in 2023, the Child Protection Section, Civil Affairs Section, UNPOL, Political Affairs Division, Corrections, and DDR Section were rated most highly as integrating gender.⁸³ The scorecard is intended to offer incentives for sections to improve their gender responsiveness, but also act as a warning instrument. It shows where support from leadership is needed to encourage aspects of this work in different sections.

With the gender scorecard tracking progress internally, however, there remains a gap in efforts to capture what progress is being made on WPS externally to the mission and its *impact* on addressing some of the gendered dimensions of conflict in areas the mission is mandated to support. It was noted in interviews that centralised data collection was not MONUSCO’s greatest strength.⁸⁴

The gender scorecard seeks to assess how different sections within the mission are tracking their efforts to integrate gender-sensitive analysis into their work.

Several interviewees noted that reporting mechanisms were limited by the types and quality of information that was being captured. The quarterly Secretary-General’s reports on the mission include a standalone section on WPS which provides useful information on activities undertaken by the mission in support of women’s participation and their protection. Most of the information shared in reporting reflects quantitative data on women’s participation in certain activities to support the mission’s WPS mandate, rather than assessing any qualitative impact or outcomes based on those activities.

Furthermore, reporting is only as good as the data that is inputted into the system by different units and teams. This has continued to vary considerably across the mission, particularly in terms of the input of data into the Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE) database.⁸⁵ Data is captured in SAGE on incidents in relation to women, response, or displacements, as well as gender- and sex-disaggregated data. The SAGE system is designed to track incidents and visualise hotspots. It is, therefore, largely quantitative in nature and reports on incidents rather

83 Feedback from MONUSCO personnel, September 2024.

84 Interview A6 (DRC-CIV).

85 Interview A6 (DRC-CIV).

than the impact of different activities that are undertaken.⁸⁶ While the purpose of SAGE thus is not to measure impact, the variances in data contribute to a gap in the ability of the mission to track progress or assess indicators to reduce the gendered dimensions of the conflict.

Efforts towards addressing some of these challenges in measuring performance and impact have been underway across peacekeeping. At the time of interviewing, the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS) was being rolled out in all peacekeeping missions and had been launched in MONUSCO in 2019. CPAS is intended to support missions to assess their operating environment more systematically, identify what influence they aim to have, and evaluate progress towards these goals using data and analysis. The data and analysis are then used to track impact over time, assess performance, inform future plans, and formulate recommendations for decision-makers and mission leadership to enhance mandate implementation and the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations as a whole to achieve global peace and security objectives more fully.⁸⁷ Gender considerations were integrated into CPAS to collect data against the 15 WPS core indicators and 11 elective indicators; however, data literacy and culture remain ongoing challenges.⁸⁸

According to some interviewees within the mission, the mission's centralised data collection efforts needed to be linked more effectively to the work that is going into the CPAS to report on activities and impact.⁸⁹ Arguably, the collection of better and more varied data on the mission's work would enable the mission to assess the impact of their activities on an ongoing basis, also allowing the mission to adapt their efforts to have a greater impact.⁹⁰ This would be enhanced further through the collection of qualitative data in addition to quantitative gender-disaggregated data to demonstrate the impact of the mission's activities on WPS as part of reporting processes.⁹¹

86 Interview A9 (DRC-CIV).

87 Forti, D., 'UN Peacekeeping and CPAS: An Experiment in Performance Assessment and Mission Planning', International Peace Institute, 2022.

88 UN, *The Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System – Taking stock four years after the launch*, April 2022, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/taking_stock_of_cpas_implementation.pdf (accessed 17 June 2024).

89 Interview A9 (DRC-CIV). See also De Coning, C. and Brusset, E., 'Towards a Comprehensive Results-based Reporting and Performance Assessment Framework for UN Peacekeeping Operations', NUPI Paper No. 4, 2018.

90 An Office of International Oversight Services (OIOS) Report in June 2022, which included an analysis of MONUSCO's approach to WPS in electoral settings, identified, among other items, a need to reinforce performance monitoring frameworks and coordination to inform WPS programming in missions. See: UN General Assembly, *Evaluation of women, peace and security in field-based missions: elections and political transitions – Report of the Office of International Oversight Services*, UN Doc. A/77/83, 1 June 2022, pp. 6, 22.

91 UN General Assembly, *Overview of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations: budget performance for the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 and budget for the period from 1 July to 30 June 2025 – Report of the Secretary General*, UN Doc. A/78/726, 22 January 2024, p. 39.

5.2. Primacy of participation

The value and importance of women's meaningful participation in political and peace processes has been reflected in engagement activities by mission and visibly demonstrated through the leadership of the current Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG). Within the DRC, there is high-level engagement and messaging from the Congolese government on supporting women's participation in politics. The government has a Minister for Gender, and interviewees explained that the first lady had been engaging with the mission on issues related to WPS.⁹² At the time of research, interviewees noted that new faces had joined the government, including many from the diaspora. According to one interviewee, this had brought a more open viewpoint to the integration of the WPS agenda by MONUSCO.⁹³ However, systemic change in women's participation in politics and government institutions across the DRC remains an ongoing challenge, as demonstrated by the more recent 2023 elections, where women were underrepresented as candidates.⁹⁴ Similarly, the mission has faced its own obstacles in seeking to increase the number of women represented across different roles and functions within the mission.

Based on the recognition of the important roles that women can play as agents for change, the WPS agenda requests all targeted actors, including peace operations, to promote women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. In this section, we analyse the importance (or lack thereof) accorded to the meaningful participation of women in all aspects of the peace operation by looking into how the mission has worked to strengthen women's participation within the mission, as well as in political and peace processes and in the security sector in the DRC.

5.2.1. Visible representation in the mission

As previously mentioned, one of the three focus areas of the work of the gender affairs unit is to progress the mission's gender parity strategy. It was the understanding of the research team that this is based on assumptions that the representation of women within MONUSCO complements other efforts to increase women's participation in political and security institutions (through visible representation), and contributes to efforts by the mission to deliver on its mandate.⁹⁵ As of December 2021, women represented 20.6% of the national and international civilian staff, and the last two SRSGs were women. Regarding uniformed personnel, women

92 Interview A5 (DRC-CIV).

93 Interview A5 (DRC-CIV).

94 The Carter Center, *Final Report – General Elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, December 2023, p. 58.

95 See: Keita, B., 'Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Participation in Peace Processes in the Democratic Republic of Congo: The Experience of MONUSCO', 10 March 2022, <https://www.accord.org.za/analysis/advancing-gender-equality-and-womens-participation-in-peace-processes-in-the-democratic-republic-of-congo-the-experience-of-monusco> (accessed 20 June 2024).

represented 26.5% of all Individual Police Officers, 16.7% of all Formed Police Units, and 20% of military staff officers and military observers. While only 5.4% of military contingent members were female, this represented an increase of over 2% since 2019.⁹⁶ In the intervening period since the interviews, as of June 2024, there has been an increase in the number of women serving in the military component in MONUSCO, who now represent 7.69% of the force⁹⁷.



Bintou Keita (Guinea), current SRSG in the DRC and Head of MONUSCO (left); and former SRSG and Head of MONUSCO, Leila Zerrougui (right). (Photos: MONUSCO)

With regards to international civilian staff, women represented 31.2% as of October 2021. Women further continued to make up less than 25% of the senior leadership team at the D-1 and D-2 director levels. The numbers were even lower for national staff, where women constituted less than 20% of the workforce.⁹⁸ The disparity in women's representation at the level of national staff was a particular concern for the mission,⁹⁹ especially in anticipation of the transition process, which will rely increasingly on national staff to support the drawdown.

The gender affairs unit's work in support of the mission's gender parity strategy included undertaking focus groups with national and international civilian staff to assess conditions of work in the mission, for example, assessing why women are not willing to deploy to certain areas in the mission. Some of the concerns that were expressed as part of those processes relate to issues concerning negative bias in recruitment processes and the advancement of women within the

96 Ibid.

97 UN Security Council, United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo – Report of the Secretary-General, UN Doc. S/2024/482, 20 June 2024, p. 16.

98 MONUSCO Gender Affairs Unit, 'Gender Parity in MONUSCO Townhall Meeting', presentation, 24 November 2021 (copy on file with authors)..

99 Interview A19 (DRC-CIV).

mission.¹⁰⁰ The mission has identified a range of challenges to reaching parity, including the roster recruitment system (which provides a limited pool from which to select qualified female candidates), practices of internal recruitment processes or the priority given to downsized staff (again, a smaller pool of women), and ‘incorrect assumptions that women are not fit for certain positions in [a] traditionally male-dominated field’.¹⁰¹ While these challenges were identified at the mission level, it seems reasonable to assume that they are relevant across other missions as well, and thus efforts to address them should be taken within the mission as well as the UN system more broadly.

However, many T/PCCs have not instituted effective measures to increase the meaningful participation of women in their security institutions, meaning there is a limited pool of women to be deployed.

In terms of the mission’s military and police components, the mission is reliant on the DPO’s engagement at headquarters with T/PCCs to increase the number of women deploying to the mission. However, many T/PCCs have not instituted effective measures to increase the meaningful participation of women in their security institutions, meaning there is a limited pool of women to be deployed. This is compounded by differing views and expectations about the role of women in the military (and subsequently, peacekeeping missions). Some personnel continue to default to traditional gender stereotypes about the roles of women, with some interviewees noting that female staff had been criticised for wearing pants or prevented from driving.¹⁰² These attitudes present a challenge as the mission attempts to work with local partners to shift gender stereotypes in the country and implement gender-sensitive programming.

5.2.2. Creating space for women in political and peace processes

MONUSCO has been supporting efforts at the national and local levels to develop strategies to improve women’s participation in political processes. While the legislative changes to the constitution in 2006 and the Parity Law adopted in 2015 demonstrate progress, challenges remain with implementation, as women’s participation usually falls below the expectations of parity and proportion of representation outlined in existing legislation. There is little reliable data available on women’s participation in local governance structures and institutions, but in 2021, only

¹⁰⁰ Interview A3 (DRC-CIV).

¹⁰¹ MONUSCO Gender Affairs Unit, ‘Gender Parity in MONUSCO Townhall Meeting’, presentation, 24 November 2021 (copy on file with authors).

¹⁰² Interview A7 (DRC-CIV). See also Vermeij, L., ‘Women First, Soldier Second: Taboos and Stigmas Facing Military Women in UN Peace Operations’, International Peace Institute, October 2020.

16.6% of the seats were held by women in the provincial assemblies.¹⁰³ Interviews with mission staff in 2021 also gave a glimpse into the situation at the time: Of the five government administrative units in North Kivu, none were led by women prior to the state of siege.¹⁰⁴ There were no female mayors. There were only three women in a provisional assembly of 40 or so individuals.¹⁰⁵

Interviewees emphasised how accountability was lacking to ensure that political parties meet the provisions for women's representation as guaranteed by the existing legislation. Furthermore, electoral laws do not render the non-achievement of gender parity in electoral lists as grounds for inadmissibility, giving leeway for political parties to neglect commitments around women's participation. It was also noted that the government should be able to throw out parties that do not have the required number of women.¹⁰⁶ Of relevance here is that the electoral law has been reformed since the interviews took place in 2021, with important changes including the removal of discriminatory language and efforts to incentivise parties to support women's equal participation through the introduction of a new provision on the abolition of registration fees for political parties which include at least 50% women on their party lists.¹⁰⁷ These changes were a welcome sign of progress. However, they did not significantly impact the representation of women elected to parliament in the recent elections, with only a slight increase in the number of women elected as representatives (up from 10.3% to 13.2%).¹⁰⁸

Interviewees explained that attitudes continue to exist among those in power in political parties who do not believe women can win elections.¹⁰⁹ The mission has been attempting to activate women's leagues in political parties and start the process early – two years in advance of elections – to get women in the pipeline. This was a particularly important priority as the DRC was preparing for upcoming elections at the time of the interviews. The mission supported women's participation in the 2023 election period, and the JHRO engaged in combatting hate speech targeted at female political leaders online and in traditional media, as well as providing individual protection of leaders at risk.¹¹⁰ There were documented instances of women activists being assaulted at polling stations during the elections in 2023, prompting the Minister for Gender, Family and Children to adopt a future road map on prevention and response to

103 Keita, 'Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Participation', op. cit.

104 A state of siege, similar to emergency measures imposed by the government, was put in place in North Kivu and Ituri in May 2021 to address insecurity. This put those provinces under the control of military governors, with the measures being continuously renewed and extended. See: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/17/east-congo-violence-worsening-despite-military-rule-u-n-experts>.

105 Interview A7 (DRC-CIV).

106 Interview A7 (DRC-CIV).

107 UN Women, 'DRC: the electoral reform and women's political participation', 2023, https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/BRIEF_FEMALE%20POLITICAL%20PARTICIPATION%20FINAL.pdf (accessed 20 June 2024).

108 UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, UN Doc. S/2024/251, 21 March 2024, p. 2.

109 Interview A17 (DRC-CIV).

110 Hunt, C.T., Day, A., Bapt, E., Edu-Afful, F., Gérard-Baldé, A., Maalim, H. et al., 'UN Peace Operations and Human Rights: A Thematic Study', EPON Report, 2024, p. 77.

electoral violence towards women.¹¹¹ However, even with these recent pronouncements, more comprehensive structural changes to support women's meaningful political participation are still lacking on a societal level, and several interviewees noted that it can be very difficult to be a woman in politics. Concerns about insecurity are also weaponised and used as a political tool to justify excluding women from the political space.¹¹²

At the sub-national level, the mission stepped up efforts to increase women's participation at the grassroots level in community meetings known as *barazas*. According to one interviewee, these are traditionally male assemblies, and 'are often a bunch of guys taking decisions on security on behalf of everyone else.' When MONUSCO has been present and sponsoring these events, they insisted on inclusiveness.¹¹³ For example, MONUSCO also organised a training on leadership for 20 girls from secondary schools in Bukavu in July 2021 to support efforts to enhance women's participation as part of local governance.¹¹⁴ There were many other engagement activities the mission undertook in the period ahead of the 2023 elections, including, for example, capacity-building workshops and meetings between senior mission leadership and political candidates to understand the challenges faced by women running for election.¹¹⁵ According to a recent EPON report, civil society members in DRC perceive that MONUSCO's efforts towards empowering youth and women's groups have led to their increased participation in political spaces.¹¹⁶

Regarding women's participation in peace processes, there are similar challenges. In the DRC, men and women strongly adhere to patriarchal views around power and participation, where power circles are viewed as a male sphere of influence. The International Men and Gender Equality Survey revealed that men and women widely ascribe power to men and support attitudes that place a lighter emphasis on women's active participation.¹¹⁷ The polarised and tense environment introduced by conflict reinforces these social behaviours that marginalise women from decision-making processes.¹¹⁸ Within the same vein, the perception that 'war and peace are exclusively the business of men' creates hurdles to women's involvement in peace processes. It is often the case that the participation of women in peace negotiations is viewed as unjust because they 'were not fighters'¹¹⁹ and, therefore, perceived as less concerned with conflict issues.

111 UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General*, 2024, op. cit., p. 2.

112 Interview A17 (DRC-CIV).

113 Interview A7 (DRC-CIV).

114 S/2021/807.

115 UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, UN Doc. S/2023/932, 30 November 2023, pp. 10-11.

116 Hunt et al., 'UN Peace Operations and Human Rights', op. cit., p. 55.

117 Slegh, H., Barker, G., and Levitov, R., *Gender Relations, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and the Effects of Conflict on Women and Men in North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo*, Washington, DC, and Cape Town, South Africa: Promundo-US and Sonke Gender Justice, May 2014.

118 Mpoumou, D., 'Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Discourse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo', International IDEA, 2004, p. 122.

119 Ibid.

The mission has also been working with local media and journalists to address harmful stereotypes and create space for women to engage in media. The mission has organised workshops with journalists from different local radio stations to reinforce their capacities and stress the importance of interviewing women so that women's voices can be considered in radio broadcasts.

MONUSCO worked to address some of these challenges and create space for women in peace processes through several initiatives and activities. One example is the creation of a network of women mediators (see Box 2). The mission has also been working with local media and journalists to address harmful stereotypes and create space for women to engage in media. The mission has organised workshops with journalists from different local radio stations to reinforce their capacities and stress the importance of interviewing women so that women's voices can be considered in radio broadcasts. The mission has also been working with partners to enable women's participation, for example, by creating conditions for women to have some degree of financial autonomy and to empower them to advocate for themselves.¹²⁰ As the mission is drawing down, however, there are concerns about the ongoing sustainability of some of these programmes without the mission acting as an enabler for them.

Box 2 – Women mediators in the DRC

MONUSCO has established a network of 350 women mediators to undertake key roles in preventing and resolving conflicts in North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri and the Kasais. Working with the gender affairs unit, the mission has supported 20 women mediators in North Kivu who were engaged in resolving six local and familial conflicts in 2019. Mediators reinforce the capacities and techniques of conflict resolution. According to interviewees in the Goma field office, after hosting workshops with women mediators, the mission called security actors and local authorities to introduce them to the women mediators, and advocate for their inclusion in conflict resolution processes.¹²¹ These efforts by MONUSCO have been supported by a network of women's civil society organisations.

¹²⁰ Interview A13 (DRC-CIV).

¹²¹ Interview A13 (DRC-CIV).

More recently, the mission has been actively engaged in seeking to overcome these barriers and stereotypes to ensure that women can participate in regional peace processes.¹²² In the case of the Nairobi process led by the East African Regional Community, MONUSCO identified six women to participate in the third round of consultations, where women represented 40% of civil society participants and provided technical support with UN Women.¹²³ This was a marked improvement, as women were ‘largely absent’ in the first round of consultations in April 2022.¹²⁴ There has been less scope to influence the Luanda process, given that discussions are held at the head of state level,¹²⁵ reflecting ongoing challenges where there is a lack of representation of women in senior levels of government or when they are not given space to ensure their meaningful participation in peace processes. MONUSCO and other UN entities, including the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, have advocated for women’s participation in the Nairobi and Luanda processes, and civil society entities have sought ongoing support from MONUSCO and other regional entities to continue to advance those efforts.¹²⁶

5.2.3. Addressing barriers to women’s participation in the security sector

Women’s representation in the Congolese Security Forces is very low. Reliable and up-to-date statistics on women’s representation in the Congolese Security Forces are also not available, but estimates put women’s representation in the armed forces (FARDC) at approximately 3%¹²⁷ and in the national police (PNC) at around 10%. However, most women serve in junior roles.¹²⁸ There are action plans to encourage the PNC to reach a women’s representation level of 30%.

122 Two regional processes have been underway to bring peace to the DRC. The Nairobi Process is supported by the East African Community (EAC), with the political track focused on supported dialogue between armed groups in the eastern part of the country and the Government of the DRC, whereas the Luanda process is focused on inter-state dialogue between the DRC and Rwanda. See: Amani Africa, ‘Briefing on mediation and reconciliation in conflict resolution in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo’, 14 July 2024, <https://amaniafrica-et.org/brief-on-mediation-and-reconciliation-in-conflict-resolution-in-the-eastern-democratic-republic-of-congo> (accessed 29 September 2024).

123 UN Security Council, *Annex to letter dated 20 December 2022 from Permanent Representatives from Ireland, Mexico and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations address to the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. S/2022/9991, 21 December 2022, p. 2.

124 Ibid.

125 UN Security Council, *Annex to the letter dated 6 December 2023 from the Permanent Representatives of Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. S/2023/964, 6 December 2023, p. 2.

126 See, for example, the statement of Pétronille Vaweke, Coordinator of Women Engaged for Peace

in Africa, at the UN Security Council meeting on the situation in the Great Lakes in April 2024 in: UN Security Council, *The situation in the Great Lakes region*, UN Doc. S/PV.9615, 9615th Meeting, 24 April 2024, p. 6.

127 UN Security Council, *United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo – Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. S/2024/482, 20 June 2024, p. 13.

128 SIDA, ‘The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): Country Gender Profile’, September 2009, <https://cdn.sida.se/publications/files/sida52475en-the-democratic-republic-of-congo-drc-country-gender-profile.pdf> (accessed 20 June 2024), p. 21; Interview B10 (DRC-POL).



Kinshasa, D.R. Congo – 15 March 2024: A panel on women's rights organized in Kinshasa. (Photo: MONUSCO / Jean-Claude Wenga)

Nevertheless, these targets have been overlooked in previous recruiting drives (e.g., in 2018), which did not consider gender balance.¹²⁹

Women have a long history in the FARDC, starting with Mobutu's forced recruitment of women parachuters in 1966. Before the integration of militia groups within the national army started in 2003, numbers were slightly higher, at approximately 5%.¹³⁰ The FARDC, however, has a poor reputation among the civilian population, given its lack of professionalisation and involvement in human rights violations and violence against civilians, including women. It is thus viewed unfavourably as a career choice for women. If this could be addressed, it would constitute steps towards increased incentives for women to join the FARDC.

Studies also show that traditional conceptions of 'femininity' preclude women from engaging in the security and police sector.¹³¹ Within the mission, interviewees expressed an awareness of cultural norms that are hurdles to women's participation, which stem from the widely held belief that security should be a male-dominated field. Interviewees explained that it is easier to recruit women into the PNC than FARDC. According to one interviewee, this is because young women are seen as giving life, rather than as taking life.¹³² Consequently, the police are viewed as an organisation that supports life to a larger degree than the military. Still, studies show that the incompatibility of the sector's work with views of the 'feminine nature' of women is the second most cited obstacle keeping women from joining the national police.¹³³

As part of its mandate, MONUSCO has engaged in supporting SSR efforts in the DRC, including initiatives to increase the number of women serving in the FARDC and PNC. There has been a focus on capacity building of national partners to ensure that institutions are equipped to address issues of injustice or abuses against women as the transition process advances. For instance, the mission has been working with the PNC to deliver training on human rights, international humanitarian law, and prevention of sexual violence, with efforts to ensure that commanders and lower levels in the forces comply.¹³⁴ However, violence and human rights violations remain an endemic problem.

The mission has, nevertheless, been actively working on delivering capacity-building activities to the Congolese security forces, including through modules on gender awareness and advocacy.¹³⁵ For example, in April 2021, MONUSCO organised a workshop in Kinshasa with gender focal points from security institutions to discuss barriers to the recruitment, retention, career

129 Interview B10 (DRC-POL).

130 Baaz, M. E., and Stern, M., 'Whores, Men, and Other Misfits: Undoing 'feminization' in the Armed Forces in the DRC', *African Affairs*, 110(441): 563–585.

131 Security Sector and Police Reform Programme, 'The State of Gender in the Congolese National Police', 2015, p. 18.

132 Interview A19 (DRC-CIV).

133 Security Sector and Police Reform Programme, 'The State of Gender in the Congolese National Police', op. cit., p. 18.

134 Interview A2 (DRC-CIV).

135 UN Women, 'Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming in United Nations Peacekeeping Activities (MONUC/MONUSCO) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo', 2012, p. 17.

development and promotion of women in the security sector. Such efforts to address barriers to recruitment and retention require long-term investment and are essential to increasing the number of women serving in security institutions, as well as ensuring that there is an enabling environment for them to remain.¹³⁶ One initiative supported by the mission included supporting the rehabilitation of accommodation facilities for women army recruits.¹³⁷

MONUSCO also engaged with civil society organisations to identify and map women serving in the security institutions, support their meaningful participation,¹³⁸ and support mentoring for women police and military officers.¹³⁹ In another more recent example, MONUSCO has supported outreach efforts to increase the number of women serving in the FARDC in the eastern provinces, with the FARDC reaching its target of 3 000 women over three years. Nonetheless, women still comprise approximately 3% of the estimated 150 000 military force.

Yet, cultural and reputational issues remain within the FARDC and PNC that continue to impact the sustainable increase in women's participation in the Congolese security sector. These are often overlooked in gendered approaches to SSR. Until such issues are addressed, it is unlikely that the FARDC, in particular, will be able to increase the number of women in its ranks significantly, even if efforts are made to address other physical barriers, including infrastructure and barracks, for instance.

While increasing women's participation had been central to the mission's approach to the implementation of the WPS agenda, some interviewees noted that it had lagged in enhancing women's participation in the security sector, among other fields, because the work of the mission on enhancing women's participation has primarily focused on elections with some efforts dedicated to tackling other gender gaps.

5.3. Addressing gender assumptions and improving gender-responsiveness

Discriminatory gender norms continue to create hurdles for women's active and meaningful participation in society. Women in the different regions of the DRC face obstacles in engaging in civic and political processes due to the commonly held belief that these are male territories. This is even more prevalent in conflict-affected regions. In this section, we analyse how the

136 UN Security Council, *United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, UN Doc. S/2021/587, 21 June 2021, p. 11.

137 UN Security Council, *United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, UN Doc. S/2023/208, 20 March 2023, p. 9

138 UN Security Council, *United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 2021, op. cit., p. 11.

139 UN Security Council, *United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 2023, op. cit., p. 9

mission has worked to address gendered assumptions in its area of operations by focusing on its efforts to change attitudes towards women's roles in society and through the development of gender-sensitive approaches.

5.3.1. Changing attitudes towards the role of women in society

Stereotypes and cultural attitudes about women and men have an impact across Congolese society, limiting their participation in political life and putting them at risk of violence if they step outside of traditional gendered roles. MONUSCO's mandate has more recently included provisions to integrate gender considerations throughout its mandate, including the conditions to support women's meaningful participation. There is a mutually reinforcing relationship between the pillars of protection and participation within the activities of the mission. Some interviewees noted that the mission's engagement in shifting the 'victim narrative' that tends to be consistently applied to women in the DRC who experience sexual violence (often addressed as part of the protection pillar of the WPS agenda) has contributed to shifting attitudes and increasing the number of women represented in various government institutions.

Yet, there are limits to what the mission can be expected to achieve when it comes to shifting gender stereotypes within the DRC, particularly ahead of the mission transition. One interviewee acknowledged that in the mission, 'You can advocate as long as you want, but if a political party is not supporting affirmative action by bringing women into the leadership of that party, then you know, you can advocate as long as you want, it will not happen.'¹⁴⁰ Interviewees further explained that many people, especially in rural areas, do not, or do not want to, understand gender equality and gender mainstreaming. In some cases, disparaging views about the role of women are not only held by men, but women as well. As one interviewee noted, the voice of women is heard on the radio, but 'even other women will argue that it is not good behaviour, or that it goes against local traditions and customs.'¹⁴¹

Of particular concern are stereotypes about inequality and women's roles identified within MONUSCO. Women within the mission are still encountering obstacles in the form of gender stereotypes, with their counterparts in T/PCCs holding culturally different views about what roles women should have in the mission (e.g., opposing them driving), right down to objecting about the fact that they are wearing trousers.¹⁴² A recent EPON report confirms there are persistent challenges in addressing gendered power relations through gender mainstreaming activities in MONUSCO.¹⁴³

140 Interview A2 (DRC-CIV).

141 Interview A13 (DRC-CIV).

142 Interview A7 (DRC-CIV).

143 Hunt, et al., 'UN Peace Operations and Human Rights', 2024, op. cit. p. 77.

Part of the challenge is expectations that women will be united on political issues. Women's platforms can be very divided and do not necessarily have a homogenous approach to different political issues or the reforms that are required.¹⁴⁴ Entrenched gender stereotypes and rigid gender roles are supported across parts of society. Several mission personnel noted the importance of being bold in challenging the status quo, but this can be difficult in a patriarchal and male-dominated context such as the DRC. That often puts mission personnel facing a paradox:

In order to do peacebuilding, you want to talk to those that matter, customary chiefs, but there is not a single woman customary chief in eastern Congo. You want to involve women in your activities and dialogues, but at the same time, you want to talk to the people that matter and possible drivers of change, positive change. But they may not necessarily be the same people.¹⁴⁵

In eastern DRC, where most of the conflicts take place, violent masculine norms are perceived as one factor that drives violence and aggression. Violent masculinities can be understood as manifestations of violent masculine norms with a specific celebration of sexual violence as a way to live up to the ideals of being a man.¹⁴⁶ In fact, violence, including sexual violence, can be viewed as a means to regain masculinity and power when there are economic and social hardships from ongoing conflict.¹⁴⁷ Within the mission, there is an understanding of how violent and aggressive types of masculinity fuel conflicts, reflected in the mission's work on positive masculinities with the PNC and the FARDC to prevent violence against women and girls.

Entrenched gender stereotypes and rigid gender roles are supported across parts of society. Several mission personnel noted the importance of being bold in challenging the status quo, but this can be difficult in a patriarchal and male-dominated context such as the DRC.

The promotion of positive masculinities has been one approach taken by the mission to mitigate and prevent violence against women and girls. It has also been endorsed as an official Congolese stance whereby the country has been championing the topic throughout its presidency of the African Union.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, MONUSCO's gender affairs unit has been engaged in capacity-building activities with strategic partners such as PNC and FARDC on issues of gender

¹⁴⁴ Interview A7 (DRC-CIV).

¹⁴⁵ Interview A9 (DRC-CIV).

¹⁴⁶ SIDA, 'The Complexity of Violence: A Critical Analysis of Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)', 2010, p. 47.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 49.

¹⁴⁸ UN, 'All Stakeholders Must Focus on Advancing Reforms to Consolidate Hard-Won Gains in Democratic Republic of Congo, Mission Head Tells Security Council', 2021, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14719.doc.htm> (accessed 29 September 2024).

integration, especially as they pertain to non-violent communication through positive masculinities and promoting the leadership of young women.¹⁴⁹

5.3.2. Building gender-responsive approaches

Integrating gender considerations across the work of MONUSCO also requires the application of gender-responsive approaches throughout mission sections. Gender-responsive approaches consider ‘the different gender roles, power dynamics, needs and interests of women, men, girls, boys and other gender identities’ with the goal of advancing gender equality.¹⁵⁰ This is also an important aspect for understanding and addressing threats to women’s security. For instance, food insecurity can drive the recruitment of young men into armed groups. One interviewee highlighted this example in the context of South Kivu. In response, the mission has supported efforts to build a market to ensure that impoverished families have a place to do their shopping. This made it a challenge for those armed groups to recruit youths, who could be more attracted to joining an armed group when there was no food at home.¹⁵¹

The mission has undertaken a range of activities to integrate gender into the work of the mission, but as outlined earlier, these responsibilities largely rest on leadership and resourcing of different substantive mission components, divisions, sections and units. Parts of the mission have further been tasked with examining how to address the high levels of CRSV in the DRC. For instance, at the time of our research, the JMAC was working with other mission components, including human rights, gender, and child protection, to develop an information acquisition plan in line with the UN’s peacekeeping intelligence policy that could inform approaches to addressing CRSV. This has been a priority of senior mission leadership.¹⁵²

However, there are often limited resources and programmatic funds for the mission to support more of these types of activities. A lack of funding has been cited as a key challenge to systematic gender mainstreaming because the mission does not receive any funds for gender promotion initiatives, which has often led to the omission of gender components from projects. Within the same vein, interviewees also highlighted how monitoring and evaluation are highly focused on the number (or capturing the quantitative statistics) of women impacted without a real comprehensive understanding of the qualitative gendered perspectives.¹⁵³

149 MONUSCO, ‘Mandates and Objectives’, 24 December 2018, <https://monusco.unmissions.org/en/mandates-and-objectives> (accessed 29 September 2024).

150 See, for example, UN DPO, *Gender-Responsive United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, Ref. 2024.07, 1 May 2024. Before 2018, the policy did not include a definition of ‘Gender-responsive approaches’; however, it articulated requirements to integrate gender analysis and mainstreaming to fulfil the implementation of the then eight resolutions on WPS.

151 Interview A8 (DRC-CIV).

152 Interview A5 (DRC-CIV).

153 Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, ‘Gendered Impacts on Operational Effectiveness of UN Peace Operations’, 2021, p. 19.

While the mission itself does not run DDR programmes, MONUSCO has, in recent years, worked to develop a more gender-sensitive approach to DDR in support of those programmes run by the government and other actors. Within MONUSCO, the DDR Section confirmed that their activities included a gendered focus (without this necessarily being done in coordination with the gender affairs unit).¹⁵⁴ With a revised approach to DDR through the Community Violence Reduction (CVR) programmes, the mission has observed results that are more effective in addressing some of the gendered conflict dimensions and which provide important lessons in taking a more gender-sensitive approach to their work, including with partners (see Box 3).

With a revised approach to DDR through the Community Violence Reduction (CVR) programmes, the mission has observed results that are more effective in addressing some of the gendered conflict dimensions and which provide important lessons in taking a more gender-sensitive approach to their work, including with partners.

These efforts have taken place in support of national DDR efforts. In August 2021, the government appointed a national coordinator to head a new Disarmament, Demobilisation, Community Reintegration and Stabilization Program. This national approach was a welcome development to support national ownership over efforts to demobilise combatants. However, it has also been met with considerable scepticism, given that numerous efforts targeted at demobilising combatants have failed, resulting in them re-joining armed groups.¹⁵⁵ According to one interviewee, the government is saying all the right things about DDR, but it is not clear if the terminology or considerations around gender are understood or being clearly integrated into the national approach, which will be a core part of MONUSCO's transition process out of the country.¹⁵⁶

154 Office of Internal Oversight Services, 'Audit of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration in MONUSCO', 2018.

155 Kivu Security, 'Does the new disarmament and demobilization program stand a chance?' <https://blog.kivusecurity.org/does-the-new-disarmament-and-demobilization-program-stand-a-chance-of-success> (accessed 14 April 2022).

156 Interview A4 (DRC-CIV).

Box 3 – Developing a Gender-Responsive Approach to DDR

DDR programmes have tended to focus on the combatants, rather than the dependants or those that have been victims of crime. The gender dimension has neither been a factor of analysis nor of work, and there is very little data available on female combatants. Traditional DDR programmes have further failed to address the root causes that ‘push’ or ‘pull’ individuals to join armed groups. This includes identifying a community approach targeting a broader range of both direct and indirect beneficiaries, based on the assumption that if people have access to government services, they are less likely to engage in conflict. Community approaches promote social cohesion and economic development, contributing to peace.¹⁵⁷

In response to this, the mission has put in place CVR programmes intended to ensure that dependants and victims are also supported through livelihood programmes, as well as demobilised combatants. The CVR approach sets a minimum target of 30% female participation as a project selection priority to enhance the number of women beneficiaries of DDR/CVR interventions. Interviewees highlighted the emergence of a paradigm shift in the mission in terms of the true victims of conflict and armed groups. This further inspired the introduction of reintegration packages that were 50% victim-focused and 50% combatant-focused, and which allowed for the integration of 21 women.¹⁵⁸

5.4. People-centred approaches: building trust and a protective environment

A people-centred approach requires the peace operation to be responsive to the legitimate needs and desires of affected communities. In this part, we analyse MONUSCO’s people-centred approaches by examining its efforts toward addressing women’s protection needs and its engagement with communities and civil society.

5.4.1. Addressing women’s protection concerns and perceptions of security

Women in the DRC, especially in conflict-affected regions, continue to be subjected to CRSV and sexual and gender-based violence, which are often utilised by warring parties to undermine social cohesion and further drive conflict. These incidents remain underreported due to stigma, shame, a lack of resources and overall accountability. Furthermore, incidents of violence are also prevalent in several national institutions despite efforts to ensure a gender-responsive work

¹⁵⁷ Interview A4 (DRC-CIV).

¹⁵⁸ Interview A4 (DRC-CIV).

environment.¹⁵⁹ There is also a significant level of sexual violence occurring among civilians, reflecting an overall erosion of social norms that respect women.¹⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the framing of sexual violence against women and girls as a weapon of war has resulted in ‘strategies that did not adequately address the problem of sexual harm, let alone the broader gender harm that women experience in the eastern DRC’.¹⁶¹

Efforts to implement the mission’s PoC mandate have been mainstreamed across the mission. At the time of the interviews, the mission had a small advisory team of three people supporting its efforts to implement the POC mandate. The POC team viewed itself as a ‘connector and facilitator’ within the mission as it relates to POC,¹⁶² and took a decentralised approach to POC, which focused on the end state, i.e., reducing the threat of armed conflict, conflict resolution and support to state authority.¹⁶³ The POC team provided recommendations directly to senior leadership and other sections and components. For instance, this might involve concerns raised about internally displaced women and refugees and their inability to access markets due to security concerns. In this case, the POC team would channel concerns to Force Headquarters about the need for a greater presence of the force military component in the area. This example illustrates how all of the different sections were expected to implement the WPS agenda in their work. Interviewees explained that there were regular discussions about WPS in the implementation of quick-impact projects, including community violence reduction projects. However, without dedicated programmatic funds, it remained difficult to increase capacity to implement WPS, and gender was sometimes omitted from projects.¹⁶⁴

The mission has prioritised PoC as part of its mandate. Many of the innovations that underpin the UN’s approach to PoC in peacekeeping have emerged from the practices of MONUSCO, including the use of community alert networks and CLAs. In those efforts, women in the community have not only been beneficiaries, but also key stakeholders in driving those efforts and informing the work of the mission.¹⁶⁵ The mission has relied on a combination of its uniformed component to provide a presence and project force in areas where civilians – including women and girls – require protection, drawing on early-warning systems and mobility of the military forces and civilian components in the mission. However, as interviewees noted, the force has continued to face a series of challenges in mobilising resources to prevent or respond to attacks, given the limited resources available, restrictions on movement, and language barriers. This has

159 MADRE and SOFEPADI, ‘A Report for the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women’, op. cit. p. 8.

160 Hilhorst, D., and Bashwira, M., ‘The Women’s Movement in South Kivu, DRC: A Civil Society Analysis’, Special Chair Humanitarian Aid and Reconstruction, 2014, p. 18.

161 Aroussi, S., ‘Women, Peace, and Security and the DRC: Time to Rethink Wartime Sexual Violence as Gender-Based Violence?’ *Politics & Gender*, 13(3), 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1743923x16000489>, p. 13.

162 Interview A6 (DRC-CIV).

163 Interview A6 (DRC-CIV).

164 Interview A6 (DRC-CIV).

165 Interview A19 (DRC-CIV).

meant the mission has not always met expectations when it comes to its protection mandate, with dire results for civilians, including women and girls.¹⁶⁶

In line with MONUSCO's mandate, efforts to implement the mission protection mandate have included a focus on CSRV. These have primarily focused on CRSV as part of overall efforts to combat violence exerted by state security forces and armed groups. However, while efforts have been focused on supporting the three tiers of PoC as part of the mission's approach – namely, physical protection, protection through dialogue and engagement, and establishing a protective environment – concerns were raised at the time of interviews about the forthcoming transition process and protection vacuum that may result, given that the government has struggled to fulfil its responsibility to protect civilians. MONUSCO continues to undertake joint operations with the FARDC – in compliance with the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDPP) – however, ongoing concerns regarding the capacity of the security forces to fill the void when the mission departs remain. UN funds, agencies and programmes will remain in place to provide ongoing support. However, their operations are likely to be more limited without a security presence in the country.

Widespread sexual violence in the country and the discourse around victims and survivors of sexual violence has often contributed to the victimisation of Congolese women in ways that reinforce gender stereotypes of women as victims only and as a population in need, rather than one that can be empowered. Furthermore, such narratives contribute to diminishing women's agency in their own protection.

Despite mandate language focusing on the importance of victim- and survivor-focused approaches, support for victims and survivors generally falls outside the mission mandate. Instead, referral pathways are in place, and the mission relies on international and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for this work. Interviewees, however, noted that there was a lack of support mechanisms for victims and survivors. For instance, they compared the situation to DDR processes, noting that combatants are focused on being reintegrated into society. However, that does not happen for victims and survivors of sexual violence.¹⁶⁷ Unfortunately, international and national NGOs also lack adequate resources to provide the necessary support.

Together with the challenges identified in the previous sections of this report, this has made it difficult for the mission to deliver on WPS aspects of the mandate focused on protection. Several interviewees questioned the formulation of mandates that were too ambitious compared to what the mission could realistically be expected to achieve with the resources and capabilities that were available.¹⁶⁸ Such efforts were further compounded by the presence of a growing

166 See, for example, Vermeij, L., 'UN Peacekeeping Operations at a Crossroads: The Implementation of Protection Mandates in Contested and Congested Spaces', EPON, 2022, pp. 109-150.

167 Interview A4 (DRC-CIV).

168 Interview A12 (DRC-CIV).

number of armed groups and actors in the country who targeted civilians – including women and girls – as they waged conflict.

5.4.2. Community and civil society engagement

Understanding women’s perceptions of their own security is essential to informing efforts by peacekeeping missions to protect women, girls and other gender identities from attack. Engagement with communities and civil society is, therefore, a key requirement for the effective implementation of WPS mandates. While there were no references to engagement with women’s organisations and civil society in the initial MONUSCO mandate resolution from 2010, MONUSCO’s mandate has increasingly contained numerous references to WPS, including with regards to political support and engagement with women and civil society, coordination with civil society on DDR, and involvement of civil society in discussions about the implementation of the transition plan.

Understanding women’s perceptions of their own security is essential to informing efforts by peacekeeping missions to protect women, girls and other gender identities from attack.

Different sections across MONUSCO have the responsibility to engage with a diverse range of civil society actors and stakeholders to support the implementation of the mission’s mandate, although this level of engagement can vary depending on the unit and their prioritisation of the WPS elements in the mission mandate. Where possible, this is supported by the gender affairs unit; however, it has experienced constraints, including in funding and capacity, when it comes to working with local women’s organisations and civil society organisations.¹⁶⁹ The range of actors and forums that MONUSCO engages with has included youths and students in universities and primary and secondary schools, religious groups in civil society (Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims), people with disabilities, and various women’s organisations.¹⁷⁰

One best practice highlighted by mission staff was the mapping of hot spots for women. Based on consultations with security actors, civil society and women leaders, lists of hot spots have subsequently been shared with the MONUSCO Force. Between December 2020 and March 2021, the Mission worked with women’s organisations to continue mapping security hotspots in South Kivu and Ituri, where women and girls were at risk. The mapping was sometimes shared with the national security and defence forces, as well as with protection actors to be included in protection mechanisms.¹⁷¹ During 2021, there were also discussions with women

¹⁶⁹ Interview A13 (DRC-CIV).

¹⁷⁰ Interview A3 (DRC-CIV); Interview A13 (DRC-CIV).

¹⁷¹ S/2021/274, para. 53.

leaders from eastern DRC about strengthening gender perspectives and women's meaningful participation in decisions concerning the Mission's activities and PoC.¹⁷² It is, however, difficult to assess the extent to which such consultations have an impact on the planning, coordination and performance of the mission.

There was an awareness among many interviewees in terms of the WPS mandate that civil society organisations were core partners to the work and activities of the mission. However, resource constraints, a lack of programmatic funding, and the need for multi-year funding from partners were cited as impediments to further sustained engagement.

Engagement with civil society is also essential to building trust. This was something highlighted in discussions with mission leadership, both in terms of the implementation of the WPS agenda and the youth, peace and security agenda.¹⁷³ There was an awareness among many interviewees in terms of the WPS mandate that civil society organisations were core partners to the work and activities of the mission. However, resource constraints, a lack of programmatic funding, and the need for multi-year funding from partners were cited as impediments to further sustained engagement.¹⁷⁴ These will remain ongoing challenges as the mission transitions.

172 S/2021/987, para. 50.

173 Interview A19 (DRC-CIV).

174 Interview A19 (DRC-CIV).



Goma, North Kivu, D.R. Congo – 20 December 2012: Elections taking place in a polling center in the city of Goma at the Faraja Institute in Goma. (Photo: MONUSCO / Alain Wandimoyi)

6. Conclusion

MONUSCO’s approach to WPS has evolved significantly during the mission’s lifespan, and the efforts of the mission have had an impact in driving change towards gender equality in the country. The commitment of senior mission leadership to leading by example and supporting efforts to drive accountability in the mission has had an impact. However, major shortcomings and impediments to improving the situation of women and moving towards gender equality in the DRC remain.

This report set out to examine how effective MONUSCO has been in implementing the WPS dimensions of its mandate. As identified through an analysis of the mandate resolution texts from 2010 to 2021, as well as an analysis of documents and interviews with MONUSCO personnel carried out in 2021, MONUSCO’s approach to WPS has evolved in this period, with emphasis on the role and centrality of women’s meaningful participation growing in the mandate. MONUSCO’s 2010 mandate and its provisions on WPS were mainly concentrated on protection measures for women and children, and contained no references to women’s participation, gender considerations, or engagement with women’s organisations and civil society. However, the WPS provisions of the mandate changed, together with the situation on the ground, and from 2013 onwards, references to WPS in the mandate texts increased.

Between 2015 and 2021 in particular, we observe a steady increase in WPS language in MONUSCO mandates. As a result, the mission has adapted its approach, aiming to respond to the emerging political interests of Council members and needs on the ground. In doing so, MONUSCO has developed a range of innovative practices to strengthen the mission’s approach to implementing WPS. As with all EPON studies, this research has been limited in identifying

areas of potential correlation in our findings, although the cumulative impact of the mission's presence and initiatives is likely to have contributed to some shifts over time.

The commitment of senior mission leadership to the WPS aspects of MONUSCO's mandate has been essential in driving forward reforms and working with regional, national and local stakeholders in government and across civil society.

The commitment of senior mission leadership to the WPS aspects of MONUSCO's mandate has been essential in driving forward reforms and working with regional, national and local stakeholders in government and across civil society. This is emerging in several different lines of effort across the mission, drawing on MONUSCO's mandate. In particular, the mission has developed a range of good practices, including on accountability (e.g., through the use of the gender scorecard), developing a women mediators' network, mapping security threats to women, supporting initiatives to address discriminatory media coverage, and implementing positive masculinity programmes.

At the same time, we identify a number of factors that have had an impact on the ability of the mission to implement the WPS aspects of its mandate. Firstly, despite the great efforts the mission has undertaken to prevent and react to violence against women and address their protection concerns, this work has been limited by deficits in the mission's capabilities and resources. This work has also been particularly challenging for the mission in a context where there is a blatant lack of trust in the national security institutions – the FARDC and PNC – when it comes to women's protection. This has been compounded by the evolving security situation in the DRC, particularly in the east, as the presence of armed groups and regional actors has created a hostile security environment for civilians at the very moment that MONUSCO is transitioning its presence in the region.

Furthermore, despite the high-level commitment of national partners to address gender inequality and support women's participation, reforms have been slow, especially at the sub-national level, where gender stereotypes restrict women's access to politics, justice and services. Supporting women's participation in the security sector has been particularly challenging given the lack of trust among the civilian population in the FARDC and PNC. Societal gender norms are also a factor that complicates the mission's work with changing attitudes towards the role of women in society. While efforts have been made to promote gender-sensitive interventions and approaches in line with various UNSC resolutions to reverse the overemphasis on women as victims, there are concerns about how well this is transferred or anchored with national partners.

Finally, while the analysis demonstrates a strong track record in working toward gender parity within the mission, these efforts face resistance to change among elements of mission staff.

Furthermore, with the work of the gender affairs unit focused on building internal capacity to integrate gender into the work of the mission, it is essential to ensure that other mission components are prepared and held accountable for gender-responsive aspects of the mandate. The gender scorecard offers a good example of efforts to promote accountability across different mission components. However, limitations in resourcing have also meant there has been limited focus on measuring the *impact* of the mission in addressing gender inequality and the drivers of conflict.

In sum, there have been limits to the types of reform and change that the mission can achieve and subsequently, its ability to address the gender dimensions of conflict comprehensively. The real potential of the WPS agenda lies in bringing about transformational change and addressing gender inequalities. This has not always been reflected in the mission's activities, and the mission has struggled to support systemic changes to shift the dynamics of gender equality and address the gendered dimensions of conflict. Nevertheless, it has started to make small and incremental changes that, if followed through on and supported, could result in greater transformational change. In the context of MONUSCO's gradual withdrawal, most of the work towards these transformational changes will have to be carried out by the Congolese authorities and civil society, with the support of those UN agencies, funds and programmes that will remain in the country. MONUSCO and the UN system's transition plans, in consultation and coordination with national stakeholders and their international partners, should pay close attention to providing support to those best placed to continue the work that MONUSCO and its national counterparts have undertaken in the area of WPS and the broader gender equality agenda.



Goma, North Kivu, D.R. Congo – 17 September 2024 : The UN Police (UNPOL) Sector Chief of Goma, other colleagues accompanied the Senegalese Formed Police Unit and the Congolese national Police as they carried out a patrol around the city of Goma. These patrols are carried out regularly to help ensure protection of civilians. During the patrol, the police stopped in several locations and shared with the population information on a toll-free emergency number that anyone can use to contact the police for urgent assistance. (Photo: MONUSCO)

7. Recommendations

MONUSCO is one of several actors that can contribute to advancing the WPS agenda within the DRC. There are several measures that can be strengthened to directly and indirectly influence the rights of women in the country, including supporting their protection and meaningful participation across society and its institutions. At the same time, consideration also needs to be given to the limitations of MONUSCO and the role of the host authorities at the national and local levels to commit to gender equality and implement the commitments that have already been made.

To strengthen the implementation of the WPS aspects of MONUSCO's mandate, this report offers the following recommendations:

7.1. For MONUSCO

- Strengthen good offices at all levels to promote gender equality and women's participation, elevate the importance of positive masculinities, and demonstrate the value of gender equality to peace.
- Continue to invest in projects and initiatives to engage men on issues related to gender and women's rights.
- Strengthen strategic communication with communities and civil society where the mission is deployed about the responsibilities of different actors on WPS and limitations of

MONUSCO when it comes to implementing some of the mandated requirements to manage expectations clearly.

- Implement recommendations of the gender affairs unit to assess the gender expertise available across the mission and take further action to develop and implement the mission's gender strategy.
- Develop a WPS strategy to detail the actions that substantive sections could undertake to support the implementation of all pillars of the WPS agenda.
- Institute accountability mechanisms as part of performance evaluations for mission personnel on integrating relevant mandated provisions on WPS into their work and identify ways to provide incentives for further action (e.g., highlighting exceptional performance).
- Demonstrate clear leadership on the importance of gender equality within the mission and support accountability mechanisms to address instances of sexual harassment and sexism within the mission.
- Collect gender-sensitive data that also incorporates or addresses considerations related to masculinities and their role as a driver of conflict.
- Strengthen the collection of qualitative data in addition to quantitative gender-disaggregated data to demonstrate the impact of the mission's activities on WPS as part of reporting processes.

7.2. For the UN Security Council and Member States

- Ensure mandates are realistic in terms of what the mission can achieve when it comes to promoting gender equality and women's participation.
- Clearly articulate expectations regarding the responsibilities of the host authorities and other actors when it comes to implementation of the WPS aspects of the mission mandate.
- Ensure that peacekeeping missions are provided with adequate resources to fulfil their mandates.
- Continue to request reporting on gender-specific aspects of mission mandates and their implementation.
- Continue to institutionalise greater coordination and collaboration between the mission's gender affairs unit and other mission components through adequate resourcing to support the tasks and objectives identified in MONUSCO's mandate.

7.3. For Troop- and Police-Contributing Countries

- Deploy uniformed units with trained gender advisors and/or gender focal points.
- Develop policies that address the barriers to women's meaningful participation in national military and police institutions, and ensure that a wide pool of women have access to opportunities to deploy to UN peacekeeping missions with adequate support.

7.4. For UN Headquarters

- Share lessons across peacekeeping missions on some of the good practices that MONUSCO has implemented, including the gender scorecard, support for efforts to establish a network of women mediators, and the mapping of hotspots for women.
- Continue to backstop efforts to strengthen attitudes around women's participation within the mission and as a core part of TCCs and PCCs, in line with wider reforms within the UN system.

7.5. For Host Authorities

- Support the continuation of initiatives to promote women's empowerment, such as the women mediators network.
- Continue the work to implement international and national commitments on women's political participation at the local, regional and national level.
- Continue and step up the work to address violence and human rights violations among the FARDC and the PNC. This includes training on human rights, international humanitarian law, and the prevention of sexual violence to ensure institutions are equipped to address issues of injustice or abuses against women as the transition process advances.
- Ensure sustainability of relevant activities and successful transfer by collaborating with MONUSCO and the UN country team during the transition process.



Goma, North Kivu, D.R. Congo – 3 October 2024: Major General Khar Diouf, Acting Commander of the MONUSCO Force, led the medal ceremony for Force Headquarters personnel in Goma. In his speech, he congratulated the recipients of the medal and expressed his gratitude to them for their unwavering dedication to the mandate of the mission and urged all participants to strictly respect the rules of conduct of MONUSCO. (Photo: MONUSCO)

8. Annexure 1: Interview questions

1. In your view, what are the mission's priorities on women, peace and security? How are those different aspects of WPS in the mandate operationalised and implemented?
2. How does the mission go about strategising these activities? And, what have been the effects of these activities from a mission perspective verses a mission-state perspective? How do you assess whether they have addressed the gendered conflict dynamics in the area of operation?
3. Which roles or which sections/units have primary responsibility for implementation of WPS-related aspects of MONUSCO's mandate, including women's participation and protection, as well as integrating gender considerations? What factors does the mission consider (if any) when deciding where to deploy female engagement teams or mixed engagement teams?
4. How is the mission dealing with being overstretched in terms of resources? What impact is this having on the mission's ability to implement WPS and gender aspects of its mandates?
5. How do you prioritise the different requirements on WPS from MONUSCO's mandate? For instance, do you think protection is prioritised more than participation?
6. How are gender considerations taken into account as a cross-cutting issue by the mission?
7. What challenges does the mission face when working with the government of the DRC to fulfil its responsibilities on WPS? What concerns does the mission have, or what gaps

does the mission see in terms of handing over to the government to advance the WPS agenda?

8. What mechanisms does the mission have in place to understand women's protection concerns and barriers to their participation in electoral, political, security and government institutions, and to address them as part of the mission mandate? And, does this differ in the capital/headquarters versus eastern DRC?

9. Annexure 2: EPON project summary

Peace operations are among the most important international mechanisms for contemporary conflict management. However, their effectiveness remains the subject of confusion and debate in both the policy and academic communities. Various international organizations conducting peace operations, including the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and the European Union (EU), have come under increasing pressure to justify their effectiveness and impact. Although various initiatives are underway to improve the ability to assess the performance of peace operations, there remains a distinct lack of independent, research-based information about the effectiveness of such operations.

To address this gap, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), together with over 40 partners from across the globe, have established an international network to jointly undertake research into the effectiveness of peace operations. This network has developed a shared methodology to enable the members to undertake research on this topic. This will ensure coherence across cases and facilitate comparative research. The network produce a series of reports that are shared with stakeholders including the UN, AU, and EU, interested national government representatives, researchers, and the general public. All the EPON reports are available via <https://effectivepeaceops.net>. The network is coordinated by NUPI. Many of the partners fund their own participation. NUPI has also received funding from the Norwegian Research Council and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to support the Network and its research, including via the UN Peace Operations project (UNPOP) and the Training for Peace (TfP) programme.

For more information, please contact:

Dr. Cedric de Coning
Research Professor
NUPI Center for UN and Global Governance
cdc@nupi.no | [@CedricdeConing](https://www.instagram.com/CedricdeConing) | +4794249168



Goma, North Kivu, D.R. Congo – 3 October 2024: Major General Khar Diouf, Acting Commander of the MONUSCO Force, led the medal ceremony for Force Headquarters personnel in Goma. In his speech, he congratulated the recipients of the medal and expressed his gratitude to them for their unwavering dedication to the mandate of the mission and urged all participants to strictly respect the rules of conduct of MONUSCO. (Photo: MONUSCO)

United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions have contributed to international, regional and national efforts to address insecurity and foster peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) for nearly 25 years. The UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and its successor mission, the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), have evolved in parallel to the emergence and growth of an international normative framework known as the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. Consequently, the mandate and operations of this longstanding peacekeeping effort reflect some of the trends, lessons and emerging practices for implementing WPS in peacekeeping missions.

This report examines how MONUSCO has worked to implement the WPS dimensions of its mandate in the period from 2010 to 2021. Through an analysis of the mandate resolution texts from this period, identifying trends over time and key themes, as well as through analysis of documents and interviews with MONUSCO personnel conducted in 2021, the report analyses how the mission has worked to implement the WPS elements of its mandate and identify factors, mechanisms and tools that have influenced its effectiveness. Assessing the approach, progress and evolution of mandates and their implementation offers insights into the contribution and limitations of UN peacekeeping when it comes to advancing women's protection and meaningful participation in a conflict-affected environment.



Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network

 @EffectivePOps

<http://effectivepeaceops.net>

