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Action and Accountability: The MOWIP Methodology as a Tool for Equality

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

This policy brief explores how the MOWIP can be used by civil society to advance gender equality and the goals of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Its aim is to outline recommendations for both civil society and security institutions in Troop and Police Contributing Countries (TPCC) to use the MOWIP to advance gender equality domestically.

The MOWIP and the international framework for gender equality and security sector governance

The MOWIP methodology is a unique tool to assess and improve women's meaningful participation in peace operations. It provides a systematic and comprehensive framework for identifying a security institution's existing good practices and possible improvements in each of ten issue areas identified as central to women's meaningful participation ranging from deployment criteria to social exclusion. The resulting recommendations can be used by governments to not only advance women's meaningful participation in peace operations, but also promote transformational change in the institution leading to greater gender equality. Civil society can equally benefit from the MOWIP by using it to inform their advocacy on women's rights and gender equality as well as in holding governments and security institutions accountable on their commitments related to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda. Further, the MOWIP can contribute to good security sector governance (SSG) by changing institutional cultures within the security sector and by strengthening internal and external oversight to ensure accountability.

For example, CEDAW, the most comprehensive international agreement addressing **women's rights**, requires states to set up mechanisms to promote women's rights in all aspects of life, including by challenging societal stereotypes that result in discriminatory attitudes and practices against women. This aligns with the MOWIP's issue area 9 on removing preconceived attitudes about women's roles and abilities relative to their job as well as peace operations deployments¹. As a methodological tool for advancing gender equality, the provisions of MOWIP fit squarely within the broader framework of CEDAW.

The WPS Agenda acknowledges, inter alia, the importance of women's experiences in conflict and peace resolution, with the aim to protect and promote women's rights in all aspects of peacebuilding. Through ten UN Security Council resolutions, the agenda mandates Member States and regional and multilateral organizations to promote the meaningful participation of women in peace and security, including in decision-making roles in security institutions and peace operations. On a national level, many WPS National Action Plans (NAPs) include commitments to increase the number of women in the security sector, in particular in police, militaries and peace operations in alignment with the MOWIP goals, but also contain provisions to ensure equal opportunity within the security sector.

The UN's security sector governance framework, including UNSCR 2553 and 2538, make clear that the promotion of women's participation in the security sector is key to building inclusive and accountable institutions that more effectively serve the population's needs and promote lasting peace, encouraging states to increase the meaningful participation of women at all levels within national security institutions and consequently in peace operations. UNSCR 2553 particularly highlights how good security sector governance is key to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, by focusing on strengthening institutions that respect the principles of accountability, transparency, rule of law, participation, responsiveness, effectiveness, and efficiency.

By focusing on barriers to equal opportunities, the MOWIP identifies issues that hinder good SSG. Further, the process of developing a MOWIP assessment is in itself an application of good security sector governance principles, as it is a participatory and transparent process involving all layers of the institution as well as civil society. While civil society organizations (CSOs), especially women's groups, have largely been excluded from discussions on security², their roles in communities equip them with invaluable knowledge concerning the security needs of the population. By engaging with the security sector, CSOs can inform security actors of the needs of their communities, playing an active role in shaping their policies and practices to better serve the population. Further, as external actors, CSOs are well placed to provide oversight and monitoring of the structures and actions of security sector institutions.

¹ See the 10 issue areas assessed in the MOWIP methodology: www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/MOWIP_Methodology_4.pdf p.24-36.

² M Bastick, T Whitman, Women's Guide to Security Sector Reform, DCAF and Inclusive Security, Geneva: 2013, available online: www.dcaf.ch/womens-guide-security-sector-reform, p1.

How can current gender equality frameworks benefit from the MOWIP?

In line with CEDAW, an increasing number of states have integrated commitments to gender equality in their foreign policies and development work (with some adopting an explicitly feminist foreign policy).³ Many states, including TPCCs, also undertake activities that further the WPS Agenda in peacekeeping. However, they still have a long way to go to ensure equal opportunities for women not only in peace operations but in their police and armed forces domestically.

Too often, current policy narratives focus on WPS goals as a foreign policy priority and narrative, particularly among countries from the Global North⁴, much more so than an agenda that can help increase women's equality within a country. Yet, NAPs should also focus on the domestic application of the WPS agenda as they can help make progress towards gender equality more broadly in society, contributing to sustainable and lasting peace.

The use of the MOWIP methodology advances on existing assessments of the implementation of NAPs by providing a complementary and robust framework to help measure the inclusion of women and men's experiences and perspectives in the assessment of the ten issue areas within security sector institutions. This framework can identify ways in which gender equality can be improved.

Specifically, countries undergoing a MOWIP assessment gain guidance not only on increasing the participation of women, but also on addressing societal attitudes that contribute to women's exclusion in the first place. For example, MOWIP issue area 4 seeks to identify the degree to which household constraints are a barrier to women's ability to deploy or stay deployed. Subsequent recommendations in this area can guide governments towards rethinking care work infrastructure and encourage men to take on more responsibility to avoid women carrying the entire or a disproportionate burden of caring for children or elderly or ill relatives. Thus, all countries seeking to promote gender equality would benefit from the information contained in the MOWIP and undergoing a MOWIP assessment should be included as part of their NAP recommendations.⁵

Box 1: Examples of NAPs focusing on national implementation of the WPS Agenda

Good examples of domestic application of WPS commitments include Liberia's NAP, which promotes the adoption of a gender-equal and socially inclusive approach in all ministries and agencies as part of the responsibilities of the steering committee in charge of NAP oversight. Among activities to prevent conflict and GBV against women and girls, the NAP includes engaging the population through media, public awareness campaigns, and forms of entertainment on women's rights, to examine perceptions around traditional gender roles and gender norms with the aim to promote gender equality. The NAP also includes activities to work with local male champions to establish peer-to-peer focus groups to change discriminatory attitudes and behaviors and examine toxic masculinities.⁶ Kenya's NAP acknowledges how emerging security threats such as climate change deepen women's socio-economic vulnerability and how this needs to inform the priorities of the NAP. It stresses how activities under the participation pillar should foster women's participation in all areas, including disaster management.⁷ Sierra Leone's NAP is used as an opportunity to amend national legislation that disadvantages women and girls, such as the Child Rights Act and the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act with respect to the age of marriage. This is seen as part of activities to address root causes of conflict in society.⁸ Bangladesh also commits through its NAP, to piloting curricula on tolerance and respect of diversity, non-discrimination and non-violence, gender equality, and human rights in education institutions.⁹ Germany's third NAP takes a positive step towards framing WPS implementation nationally compared to its previous iterations, with a focus on improving equal opportunities and social diversity within the German government¹⁰. Canada's NAP also looks inward to address discrimination and gender-based violence against indigenous women and girls, acknowledging the damaging role of colonialism and the residential school system.¹¹

3 These are: Sweden, Canada, Luxembourg, France, Mexico, Spain, and Libya, see [FFP-2021Update_v3.pdf](#) (icrw.org).

4 See for example, C. Hamilton, N. Naam, and L. J. Shepherd, Twenty Years of Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans: Analysis and Lessons Learned, University of Sydney, 2020, [blogs.lse.ac.uk/wps/2020/03/30/what-we-learned-from-analysing-twenty-years-of-women-peace-and-security-national-action-plans/](#).

5 See The Duty of Caring, Opportunities for Women in Peacekeeping Policy Series, K Piaget and C Risler, [Elsie_Policy_Brief_1A_FINAL.pdf](#) (dcaf.ch) and Caring for Carers in International Organizations, Ensuring Inclusive, Responsive and Effective Peacebuilding, Opportunities for Women in Peacekeeping Policy Series, Dr E Gordon and Dr B Jones, [Elsie_Policy_Brief_1B_FINAL.pdf](#) (dcaf.ch).

6 Liberia's Second Phase National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2019–2023, p 48 and 27.

7 Kenya National Action Plan for the Advancement of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security 2020–2024, p 22–23.

8 The Sierra Leone National Action Plan (SILNAP) II for the Full Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) (2019–2023), p 22.

9 National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, Bangladesh (2019–2022), p 15.

10 The German Federal Government's Action Plan for the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, p 39.

11 Government of Canada, Gender Equality: A Foundation for Peace. Canada's National Action Plan 2017–2022 For the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, p 4.

Institutions undergoing a MOWIP assessment validate the findings and produce evidence-based recommendations for policy and programmatic practice to address the barriers identified. The validation process is participatory and enables the assessment team and the institution to jointly develop recommendations, ensuring that they have institutional buy-in and are sustainable. As a result, countries that undergo a MOWIP assessment have an action plan for meaningful change. If the changes are implemented, gender equality will increase. These action plans should be taken up by governments, in collaboration with civil society, to make meaningful change. Civil society can add a substantive and helpful dimension in advising and supporting changes, including by building political will, across security sector institutions. They can also support awareness raising campaigns addressing harmful stereotypes, such as promoting messages that convey the importance of having women in leadership roles, or of men as providers of care, to ensure MOWIP recommendations have an impact at the societal level.

The way forward

The best way for security institutions to ensure a commitment to gender equality and the WPS Agenda internationally is to demonstrate these same values within their culture and in their activities. Applying a gender perspective to security provision, management and oversight is an iterative process with opportunities to learn both at home and in peacekeeping deployments. This only works if the same guiding principles are applied in both contexts. Furthermore, the provisions in the WPS agenda encompass both best practices in both doing the right thing and doing things right and should therefore be applied domestically too. This includes ensuring civil society oversight in security management and provision. By using the MOWIP recommendations, CSOs can keep track of security institutions' commitments and hold them accountable by participating in security sector oversight bodies, such as civilian review boards, security forums, public complaints commissions, and independent monitoring groups, as well as in NAP monitoring and evaluation frameworks. They can also use the assessment findings to inform shadow reporting of international gender equality instruments such as CEDAW. Additionally, CSOs can use the MOWIP assessment findings to inform their collaboration with security actors. For example, if the survey shows that women are excluded from performing operational duties to protect them, civil society could offer to partner with the institution to develop awareness raising campaigns to show women have the same skills as men and should be granted the same access to professional and training opportunities.

Using the MOWIP to advocate for women's inclusion in peace operations will also affect domestic armed and police forces by increasing women's meaningful participation. This in turn, has a positive effect on gender equality within the force, but potentially in broader society as well.

Follow-up activities to the MOWIP report align easily with national commitments on gender equality. International collaboration in the implementation of these activities will thus aid the country in meeting its national objectives on gender equality. Furthermore, MOWIP reports are also pertinent in defense transformation processes more broadly. The process and findings of a MOWIP contribute to good security sector governance and can help transform an institution. For example, MOWIPs help create buy-in for undergoing change towards good security sector governance principles and can help uncover issues such as why women leave the institution, which can help contribute to more accountable and effective institutions. Moreover, by delving into personnel attitudes towards women, men who do not conform to stereotypical security provider images, and people of diverse sexual orientations and identities, and by uncovering issues such as sexual harassment or discriminatory practices towards them, MOWIP recommendations can be used to correct these same behaviors towards the population too. Gender responsive institutions benefit both their personnel and the population they serve.

Box 2: Senegal's MOWIP as a model for gender equality

The launch of the MOWIP report of the Senegalese police and gendarmerie demonstrates the common objectives of the MOWIP and the WPS agenda. The Director of Equity, Equality and Gender of the Ministry of Women, Family, Gender and Child Protection, Ms. Astou Diouf Guéye, made a clear link between the NAP on Resolution 1325 and the MOWIP. The Director General of the Center for Advanced Defense and Security Studies (CHEDS), Brigadier General Mbaye Cissé, emphasized that the objective of the launch of the MOWIP report in Senegal is “to promote the dissemination and ownership of the report's findings and recommendations by police and gendarmerie personnel in order to inform follow-up actions, but also by the WPS community in Senegal in order to develop synergies between the implementation of the study's recommendations and that of the NAP on Resolution 1325.”¹²

Data findings from the MOWIP

A MOWIP assessment contains a broad range of data concerning women and men's experiences in security institutions and peace operations. It measures women and men's awareness of national and institutional policies related to gender and whether they have received any form of training on the topic. Many governments have committed to ensuring gender training and awareness-raising of gender equality for security personnel; thus, this can be useful information for civil society when holding governments to account on their commitments. The MOWIP assessment also measures the institutional knowledge of WPS, including questions about whether staff are aware of UNSCR 1325 and can explain its relevance. The survey data therefore allows civil society to monitor governments' commitments to gender equality and WPS.

Further, a MOWIP assessment contains data related to attitudes and views on women and men's roles in society. For example, it captures whether personnel think that men make better political leaders or if women should tolerate violence to keep their families together. This is valuable information for governments and civil society to understand the degree to which gender equality is embedded in society. If security institutions hold harmful stereotypical attitudes on both women and men, then we cannot assume they will be able to adequately address the needs of the entire population and keep to their gender equality commitments. A MOWIP assessment and subsequent implementation of recommendations can help address these challenges.

As suggested by issue area 4, discriminatory societal attitudes towards women and men influence access and opportunities for women in peace operations. Civil society can play a major role in amplifying the MOWIP assessment recommendations and contribute to changing these attitudes, by for example using media and public awareness campaigns to promote women's equal role in peace and security.

Box 3: Sample survey questions on peacekeepers' beliefs on gender roles

As part of issue area 9, personnel are asked the degree to which they agree or disagree with the following statements:

- Men make better political leaders than women and should be elected rather than women
- A woman should ask permission from her father/husband before deploying on a peace operation
- Male soldiers should prioritize protecting female soldiers when they are in danger
- A woman on a peace operation should still take care of her looks
- A woman must have children to be considered a real woman
- Women who deploy on peace operations cannot be good mothers

Recommendations

- 1 Civil society and governments should use the MOWIP as a framework** to measure whether governments are doing everything they can to increase women's meaningful participation in peace operations, but also to advance gender equality within security sector institutions in their country. To do so, the MOWIP methodology should be incorporated into the framework of any program, policy, or reform of the security sector as part of the framework for good SSG. This entails a commitment by governments to undertake a MOWIP assessment and, when completed, incorporate the findings and recommendations accordingly.
- 2 Governments should adequately fund civil society's work on WPS and security sector governance oversight**, including dedicated budget in their National Action Plan on 1325. Governments should also establish formal security sector oversight bodies that engage CSOs, community and religious leaders, youth networks and activists and ensure they have the adequate resources to participate.
- 3 Governments should include a commitment to undergo a MOWIP assessment and/or include recommendations from MOWIP assessments in their National Action Plan on 1325.** Specifically, the MOWIP is a framework for measuring women's meaningful participation in peace operations and can be incorporated into a NAP as such. Questions and measurements such as, "are women able to participate equitably in the decision-making, planning, implementation, and evaluation of all peace operations-related activities" and "are women having a measurable impact on how peace operations are conducted and are the impacts of deployment on the lives of uniformed women as positive as they are for men" can help provide a framework for advancing gender equality within security sector institutions as part of the domestic application of a NAP.
- 4 Civil society should use the MOWIP findings as a domestic advocacy tool** to advance CEDAW's goal of gender equality, challenging societal stereotypes that result in discriminatory attitudes and practices against women in the home and in the workplace and in male dominated security institutions.
- 5 Civil society, in particular women's groups, can draw from DCAF's Women's Guide to Security Sector Reform¹³ to help guide** practical engagement with the security sector on barriers identified in a MOWIP assessment, including how to research security issues, form coalitions, plan strategically, develop recommendations and advocate and engage directly in oversight, consultation and training roles with security actors and policymakers.
- 6 Governments and civil society should create transnational networks** on MOWIP exchange and use the outcome of these discussions in WPS and SSG policy discussions and formation.



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



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