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Strengthening UK support for gender responsive, people-centred peacekeeping in Africa

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Introduction

Twenty years after the adoption of the landmark UN SCR 1325, the UK has chosen to play a strategic role in international efforts to establish gender responsive peacekeeping and has chosen to be the penholder on peacekeeping and Women Peace and Security (WPS) in the UN Security Council. The UK sets out to support gender responsive peacekeeping in Africa through its diplomatic, defence and development activities, including the high profile Prevent Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI). With its departure from the European Union on 31 January 2020, the UK has chosen to strengthen its existing bilateral partnership with the African Union. Assisting the AU in implementing the regional body's WPS agenda is considered to provide one avenue to achieve this aim and supports implementation of the UK's own WPS agenda overseas.

Drawing on interviews with representatives from the African Union, British diplomats and African in-country experts, this article assesses how the UK engages with the Africa Union to implement the four pillars of the UN's WPS agenda that underscore gender sensitive, people-centred peacekeeping: women's participation at all decision-making levels in peacekeeping; prevention of conflict and all forms of violence against women; protection of women and girls and their rights and gender responsive relief and recovery.[1] It is argued that the UK is making an important contribution to strengthening gender responsive peacekeeping in Africa by providing both technical and financial support and is valued by staff located within AU headquarters and in AU in-country teams. This support will be lost if funding for UK's Ministry of Defence WPS initiatives and for the Prevent Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative is cut. However, the UK's programming is fragmented and the UK could better align its work to the AU's African Peace and Security Architecture gender priorities.

Gender-responsive peacekeeping in Africa

In 2018, the Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPO) and Department for Field Support (DFS) published its first 'Policy on Gender Responsive United Nations Peacekeeping Operations', outlining a mandatory requirement for all uniformed and civilian personnel to ensure UN peacekeeping operations consider women and men's concerns and experiences equally at all stages of mission design, start up, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and drawdown.[2] Guided by the four pillars of the UN's Women, Peace and Security agenda, as identified in the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and its nine related resolutions, a gender-sensitive approach is not just required to implement protection of civilians mandates, as it is often translated in practice. The policy is a nod towards the normative view that women should be equal partners in the governance, design and implementation of global and regional security architecture which, like men, they

[1] United Nations. 2018. 'Policy on Gender Responsive United Nations Peacekeeping Operations', https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/english_gender_responsive_united_nations_peacekeeping_operations_policy_1.pdf, accessed 1 April 2020.

[2] United Nations. 2018. 'Policy on Gender Responsive United Nations Peacekeeping Operations'

contribute to financing. It includes ensuring women are deployed right at the start of mission, rather than at a point when the mission is deemed stabilised and 'safer', and when protection and community engagement practices are already established.[3] The policy also speaks to the early campaigns of African women, whose experiences and responses to intra-state wars in the 1990s and their mobilisation through cross-continental organisations such as Femme Africa Solidarité and the African Women's Committee on Peace and Development, shaped both the United Nation's Women, Peace and Security agenda and the AU's African Peace and Security Architecture (2002).[4]

Today, uniformed African women are deploying to UN and African Union missions in large numbers, but their representation in senior leadership and middle management is low in comparison the representation of African men.[5] There is the perception among African military leaders that women should not be engaged in traditional, 'muscular' peace enforcement mandates typical of AU missions. Just as in other national militaries globally, women's integration is hindered by societal and institutional barriers including recruitment and deployment practices that discriminate against women or ban them from combat roles, which in turn prevents women from progressing in their military and peacekeeping careers.[6]

With notable exceptions, women are poorly represented in senior ranks within African security forces and in African militaries in particular – despite higher representation of women in some African parliaments. For example, in Rwanda women represent 64 percent of Parliamentarians, but only around 4 percent of the Rwanda Defence Force, and 22 percent of the National Police Force. Women's overall representation in the South African National Defence Force is higher – around 22 percent, but is still much lower than women's 42.7 percent representation in parliament.[7] Ghana shows a different trend. Seventeen percent of Ghana Armed Forces across all ranks and services are women, up from 10 percent in 2006. On track to meeting the UN's Uniformed Parity strategy annual targets (this year, women should make up 15 percent of military troops deployed), in 2020 12.5 percent of the GAF's deploying military peacekeepers are women,[8] though just 13 percent of Ghanaian parliamentarians are women. Since 2017, two female soldiers have been promoted to brigadier-general within the GAF and in September 2019, Brigadier-General Constance Emefa Edjeani-Afenu took up the position of Deputy Force Commander for the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

Despite efforts to recruit and promote women, most female military officers in mid-level management are deployed in 'feminised' roles such as Gender Advisors and Community Liaison or working at mid-career level in administrative functions in logistics or within mission

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[3] For a recent analysis of global trends, see Kajsa Tidblad-Lundholm. 'When are Women Deployed? Operational Uncertainty and Deployment of Female Personnel to UN Peacekeeping', *International Peacekeeping* (2020). https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2020.1760717.

[4] Toni Haastrup. 'WPS and the African Union', *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace and Security*, edited by Sara E. Davies and Jacqui True (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[5] Georgina Holmes. 'The Commonwealth, Gender and Peacekeeping', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, 106: 4 (2017), pp. 403-419.

[6] See Kronsell, Annika. 'Gender, Sex and the Postnational Defense: Militarism and Peacekeeping' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Karim, Sabrina and Beadsley, Kyle. *Equal opportunity peacekeeping: women, peace, and security in post-conflict states* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); For a recent case study on integrating women into the Ghana Armed Forces, see Holmes, Georgina. 'Feminist Institutionalism' in *United Nations Peace Operations and International Relations Theory*, edited by Kseniya Oksamytna and John Karlsrud (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).

[7] Wilén, Nina. 'Achieving a gendered transformation of the post-conflict military through security sector reform: unpacking the private–public dynamics', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 22:1 (2019), pp. 86-105.

[8] Figures obtained from the Ghana Armed Forces, 11 August 2020.

headquarters.[9] The popular approach to wait for 'generational change' slows the pace at which gender equality is being realised within African defence and security institutions and restricts women's opportunities to act as agents of change at strategic and operational levels in UN-AU peace operations.

There is a prevailing assumption within the West and among AU member states that African female peacekeepers are better able to build rapport with local communities in host countries than their white, western colleagues. In this sense, African women's 'Africanness' and gender are mutually exploited resources[10] because they are not being as effectively integrated at more senior levels in UN-AU missions. At the tactical level, uniformed African women's primary functions are engaging with local populations, assisting survivors of CRSV, low-level intelligence gathering, and functioning as African role models for women in host countries.

My research conducted in Rwanda, Ghana and the UK shows that both tactical-level female and male military peacekeepers require more pre-deployment and in-mission training on how to support survivors of CRSV. Peacekeepers are taught processes and procedures, but not the soft skills required to manage the range of responses of survivors over sustained periods of time. In pre-deployment training, the gendered needs of male survivors of CRSV are often brushed over or ignored altogether. Military leaders and trainers assume that female peacekeepers naturally know how to respond to local women's needs by dint of being the same sex. In Rwanda, female military personnel wrongly assumed they would be good at providing victim assistance because of their country's own history of CRSV.[11] Similarly, in pre-deployment training programmes, local women in host communities are depicted as victims and passive recipients of external intervention projects. This points to the requirement to develop peacekeeping training that draws on the l of communities located in the mission area, including female and male survivors of CRSV, and lessons learnt by female and male peacekeepers to better understand what support local communities and survivors of CRSV need, as well as peacekeepers themselves, at each stage of the engagement cycle.

When women from African troop contributing countries are promoted to senior decision-making positions, they often address perennial problems with a different mindset and leadership style. To prevent UN peacekeepers committing sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in DR Congo, one senior Senegalese civilian peacekeeper sidestepped traditional military approaches to disciplining troops, and instead relocated women from a frequented brothel into regularised employment. As a female British military peacekeeper who had worked with her on the project and regarded her as a role model observed:

> She took the women out of the brothel, thereby closing it down and got them employment in the next town over. So she changed the whole disciplinary issue by just taking the problem away and in doing so, she gave those women other opportunities. It was small scale, but it was absolutely superb.[12]

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[9] International Peace Institute. 2020. 'Priorities for the 2021 Peacekeeping Ministerial: Reflections from an Expert Roundtable'. https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2001_Priorities-for-the-2021-Peacekeeping-Ministerial.pdf, accessed 15 February 2020.

[10] See Marsha Henry, 'Keeping the peace: gender, geopolitics and global governance interventions'. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 19:3 (2019), pp. 263-268; and Holmes, Georgina. 'Situating Agency, Embodied Practices and Norm Implementation in Peacekeeping Training', *International Peacekeeping*, 26:1 (January 2019), pp. 55-84.

[11] Holmes, 'Situating Agency'.

[12] British female peacekeeper, interviewed by the author, 23 August 2016, Kent.

Yet the eradication of institutional barriers and discriminatory practices cannot be achieved unless military leaders value the importance of gender responsive peacekeeping and women's leadership.

The African Union's commitment to gender responsive peacekeeping

The AU has a comprehensive Africanised Women, Peace and Security agenda[13] and its policies are considered to be more progressive than its main financial partner the EU[14.] However, lack of political will at the strategic level within the Peace and Security Department[15] and gaps in policy implementation hinder gender responsive peace support operations.

The Maputo Protocol (2005) commits AU member states to adopt legislation on gender equality and women's empowerment, including in the security sector. The Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform (2011) also reflects the AU's commitment to gender equality and women's career progression within AU member state security institutions. Funded primarily by the EU and Norway, the AU's Women, Gender and Development Unit has been engaging with civil society to build capacity and create a pool of resources and policies on implementing the AU's WPS agenda and supporting states in developing their 1325 NAPS.[16] The more recent AU Strategy on Gender and Women's Empowerment (2018-2028), which updates the AU Gender Policy (2009), provides a plan for realising Aspiration 6 of the AU's Agenda 2063, the blueprint for continental transformation. Agenda 2063 calls for women's empowerment in all sectors including economic and political and an increase in women's participation in peacebuilding and peace negotiations. This leaves responsibility for implementing the AU's WPS agenda in peacekeeping to the Peace Support Operations Division (PSOD) in the Peace and Security Department, which reports into the African Peace and Security Council.

The AU is currently developing its Peace Support Operations compliance framework, though the pace has been slow. The draft PSO doctrine incorporates protection of civilian issues including CRSV and emphasises the need for African troop and police contributing countries (TPCCs) to develop 1325 NAPs. Broad agreement with the AU doctrine has been reached by staff members, Regional Economic Communities and member states and it has gone through the AU's Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security Committee (STCDSS). Although still under review, it is anticipated that these provisions will be included in the final agreed version. [17] The AU's zero-tolerance policy on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) were approved by the Peace and Security Council in 2018 and, along with a robust set of standards for conduct and discipline, are referred in AU's draft PSO doctrine.[18] However, the AU has limited resource to conduct investigations

[13] For a discussion of the AU's Women, Peace and Security agenda, see Bineta Diop 'The African Union and the Implementation of UNSCR 1325.' In *Women, Peace, and Security: Translating Policy into Practice*, edited by F. Olonisakin, K. Barnes, and E. Ikpe (London: Routledge, 2011) pp. 173–183; Haastrup, 2019; Sabrina White. 'Peacekeeping in the African Union: Gender, Women and the Battle Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse' in *Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on Regional and Global Security,* edited by P. Frankowski and A. Gruszczak (Switzlerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

[14] Anna van der Vleuten and Anouka van Eerdewijk, 'The Fragmented Inclusion of Gender Equality in AU-EU Relations in Times of Crises', *Political Studies Review*. (2020) pp. 1 –16.

[15] FCO representative 3, telephone interview with the author, 20 August 2020, London.

[16] AU representative 1, telephone interview with the author, 9 April 2020, London.

[17] AU consultant, telephone interview with the author, 3 April 2020, London.

[18] *Ibid.*

on SEA accusations, and how investigations are carried out by the AU needs to be more transparent.[19]

Agenda 2063 is not intended to undermine the importance the AU places on gender responsive peacekeeping. The AU Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security Bineta Diop continues to publicly push for the implementation of the AU's WPS agenda in peacekeeping, observing its importance during the COVID-19 pandemic.[20] When asked about the absence of peacekeeping in both Agenda 2063 and the new Gender strategy, an AU representative working within PSOD remarked that 'how Agenda 2063 was conceived was challenging in bringing everyone on board'. He reflected:

> Agenda 2063 is the 'big vision', but it doesn't diminish the other policy documents and arrangements that we have. Gender in peacekeeping is still on course – and in fact, it is picking up more now that we have the Somalia and Chad multinational joint taskforces. But Agenda 2063 only makes a mere mention of [peacekeeping]. To tie in work with 2063, we have the Maputo Work Plan on Peace and Security, which is a detailed road map. Our new policy on Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) was approved at the highest level [within the AU]. [21]

From the representative's perspective, Agenda 2063 'doesn't give meat to what needs to be done on gender' but 'within the divisions of the AU, there is a greater role' in shaping implementation.[22] Another AU representative based in an in-country team in East Africa believed that the absence of the AU's WPS agenda in peacekeeping from Agenda 2063 could potentially become problematic, and that gender responsive peacekeeping and gendered security sector reform should continue to be high on the agenda because 'those women who become empowered will still be vulnerable to CRSV and gender based sexual violence', particularly in countries transitioning out of conflict where there has been a peacekeeping presence.[23]

Peacekeeping training

The AU regards peacekeeping training an important arena for implementing the AU's WPS agenda. In December 2013, the 407th Peace and Security Council's Open Session centred on 'Women and Children in Conflict in Africa' and launched the *AU Gender Training Manual for AU Peace Support*, which sets out how AU peacekeepers should behave in missions.[24] The manual draws on the language of the Maputo Protocol and Security Council 1325 and summarizes the AU's human rights standards.[25] Plans are underway within PSOD to review the 2013 gender training manual, with a view to harmonizing the curricular, establish efficiencies in the use of training resources and reduce confusion by bringing training partners together to engage collectively in the review. Across the continent, there is momentum for incorporating some gender training into pre-deployment training for uniformed peacekeepers, though programmes mainly focus on awareness-raising around CRSV and

[19] AU in-country representative 1.
[20] African Union. 'Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in the face of COVID-19', 16 April 2020. https://au.int/sites/default/files/pressreleases/38368-pr-wps_covid_ose_15_4_2020.pdf, accessed 20 April 2020.
[21] AU representative 2, phone interview with author, 6 August 2020, London.
[22] *Ibid.,*
[23] AU representative 3, phone interview with the author, 28 July 2020, London.
[24] Haastrup, 2019, p. 378.
[25] African Women's Development and Communication Network, 'African Union Gender Training Manual for AU Peace Support Operations' https://femnet.org/2013/12/african-union-gender-training-manual-for-au-peace-support-operations/, December 2013. Accessed 1 May 2020.

SEA prevention, rather than on cultural change within security institutions, and standards vary.[26]

Resource challenges

PSOD has limited resources to implement or fund initiatives that support gender responsive, people-centred peace operations. Currently, there is no dedicated gender advisor within the division, and the PSOD gender focal person is a policy officer with more than one area of responsibility. Within the Peace and Security Department (PSD), there is one gender advisor who is required to be 'everywhere at once'.[27] Long term vacancies for key staff positions also hinder efforts. AU in-country teams design and implement local-level, context-specific initiatives as approved by their AU Heads of Missions, but have few resources. One AU in-country representative felt that 'accessing information' such as public relations materials to support local-level awareness-raising campaigns from AU headquarters worked well. Yet like the PSOD staff member, conceded that slow internal bureaucratic processes make accessing AU funding difficult. The representative continued:

> The AU needs to do a lot more [to support in-country teams], but the AU is understaffed and there are gaps in expertise…The AU headquarters is often disconnected from the field and what funding they have is often spent on headquarters activities.[28]

AU employees implementing initiatives to support gender responsive peacekeeping are concerned that the COVID-19 pandemic will affect their budgets in 2021-2022, although existing budgets for 2020 are intact. While EU funding for the AU is set to reduce, it is unclear whether Brexit will further affect their budgets beyond 2021. With the lack of resources available within the AU, PSOD staff and AU in-country teams seek out bilateral partners to support their WPS initiatives. Ideal partners should provide both technical and financial support, as the PSOD staff member explained:

> We value partners, but we are not just looking for financial support. We are also looking for technical support. Gone are the days when some of our [African] institutions did not have the experience. In the AU now, we have knowledgeable staff who have worked abroad and in academia, who are solid. The donor mentality says 'I give you money to do what you want'. But we don't just want money, administrators or funds, we want people with technical expertise…We should not reduce partner roles to writing a cheque, it is counter-productive. Partners believe in what you are doing but will provide a little bit of a shift in approach. We need partnership representatives that have worked with structures before, have gravitas and are respected in the field – not someone who is a novice.'[29]

UK support for the African Union

Since 2016 the Office of the Permanent Representative to the AU has focused its efforts on repositioning the UK ahead of Brexit. Having signed the new AU-UK Strategic Partnership (2019), the UK has increased support in areas such as trade, climate change and demography and has sought to include gender-sensitivity in UK-funded programming in line with Agenda 2063. Peace and Security is no longer the sole focus but continues to be a

[26] Holmes, 2019, 'Situating agency'
[27] AU representative 2.
[28] AU representative 3, telephone interview with the author, 28 July 2020, London.
[29] AU representative 2.

priority.[30] There are concerns among some AU member states that the UK's post-Brexit Global Britain policy and a renewed interest in the Commonwealth reflects an imperial discourse and a nostalgic longing to return to 'Britain's glorious past'.[31] The UK needs to be sensitive of these concerns when establishing partnerships. Staff based in Addis Ababa and working in AU in-country teams which I interviewed valued the contribution the UK's in-country teams have made to supporting delivery of AU WPS priorities. Within the Office of the Permanent Representative to the AU, there is one gender advisor who advises regionally on all Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) programming, although they are a stretched resource. Currently, the UK supports gender responsive peacekeeping in Africa in four practical ways: via the government's high profile Prevent Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI); providing gender training expertise to the AU and delivering pre-deployment training programmes to AU member states engaged in peacekeeping; providing in-country military assistance to support security sector reform; and by deploying small military peacekeeping contingents to UN-AU missions.

PSVI in Africa

The high profile Prevent Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative directly supports establishing gender responsive peacekeeping, with emphasis on preventing and responding to CRSV. Programming is delivered by the FCO's Gender Equality Unit (the PSVI policy lead), the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Ministry of Defence, although this may change with the FCO-DFID merger. DFID contributes via its extensive programming on violence against women and girls (VAWG), established in 2010. Following the Oxfam sexual abuse scandal, exposed in 2018, DFID produced guidance and protocols on preventing staff employed by DFID partners (i.e civilian peacekeepers) from committing SEA. Notable successes of the PSVI have been the development of standards of best practice; the International Protocol on the Investigation and Documentation of Sexual Violence in Conflict; putting sexual violence against men and boys in conflict on the issue agenda[32] and establishing the UN Team of Experts across Africa to strengthen collection of evidence for legal cases against perpetrators.

The FCO's PSVI team uses the UK's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2018-2022) as a policy tool.[33] Five of the nine 'focus countries' identified in the UK's 1325 NAP are African: Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Libya, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan. Four of these countries host some of the largest, dangerous and most expensive UN-AU peace support operations. In Nigeria, the UK is heavily engaged in counter-insurgency responses. Overall, it remains a challenge to map and assess PSVI work in Sub-Saharan Africa since programmes delivered by in-country teams do not work to an overarching PSVI strategy, and definitions of what constitutes PSVI work vary between teams.[34] Working with the Office of the Permanent Representative to the AU, the PSVI leads should conduct a review to ascertain how fragmentation could be reduced and establish processes for collating and sharing of good practice embedded in-country programming across Africa.

[30] FCO representative 3.
[31] Lyn Johnstone. 'Written Evidence, House of Lords Committee on International Relations and Defence, 2020. https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/2456/html/, accessed 13 June 2020.
[32] Kirby, Paul, 'Ending Sexual Violence in Conflict: The Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative and Its Critics.' *International Affairs* 91: 3 (2015): 457–72.
[33] FCO representative 2, telephone interview with the author, 21 April 2020, London.
[34] *Ibid.*

A recent independent report criticised the PSVI for failing to be survivor-centric.[35] The Gender Equality Unit maintains they do champion survivor-centric approaches but have been held back by an 87 percent reduction in budget, from £15m in 2014-15 to just below £2m in 2018-19; short-term funding cycles and human resource constraints[36] which follow a redirection of human resources within the FCO to Brexit after the referendum in 2016.[37] In the MOD, a view is held that joint programming is challenging because the three government departments operate to different timescales, with the MOD using a yearly planning cycle, the FCO mid-term and DFID longer term.[38] The British government has recently committed to a three-year budget cycle for the PSVI, although the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative proposes that the government should pursue a longer timeframe, for example, 25 years to enable PSVI programming to tackle 'deep-rooted causes and effects of sexual violence'.[39] This approach would better support the longer-term goals of the AU. Amid economic uncertainty and following the announcement of the FCO/DFID merger, the APPG has also called on the government to 'institutionally ring-fence the PSVI Unit by fixing its team size and annual human resources budget for the duration of the forthcoming multi-year PSVI strategy', and supports the proposal for the UK government to commit to ringfencing a minimum one percent of the UK's Overseas Development budget to tackling SGBV, including CRSV[40].

Resource constraints within the FCO have directly impacted on the Gender and Equality Unit's work within the African Union. In 2019, the Unit recruited a Regional Gender Advisor to Nairobi to work on implementing 1325 NAP priorities within East Africa. Due to staff shortages, the current incumbent was temporarily redeployed to another embassy and work was stalled.[41] Other initiatives include providing £1.3m to support the Canadian Elsie Initiative in 2019-20 to develop a barriers assessment methodology in partnership with 15 countries to increase and improve women's deployments to peace operations, and establishing a Chief of Defence Staff Network in 2017. The latter aims to encourage senior military leaders to make institutional structural changes within defence and security forces and to accelerate the promotion of women in armed forces and peacekeeping. Representatives from African defence and security forces are few, and the UK could use its diplomatic and in-country networks to encourage more AU representatives to attend and take ownership of the network.

Peacekeeping training and military assistance

The MOD oversees the British Peace Support Team (Africa), an integrated team engaged in building continental capacity for UN-AU peace support operations. Based in Kenya and funded jointly by the MOD and the CSSF, BPST(A) delivers training for partner nations and troop contributing countries (TCCs), including troops deploying to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).[42] Since 2019, BPST(A) has delivered gender training to 272 people

[35] Independent Commission for Aid Impact. 'The UK's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative'. 2020. https://icai.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/The-UKs-preventing-sexual-violence-in-conflict-initiative.pdf, accessed 27 March 2020.
[36] FCO representative 2.
[37] MOD representative, conversation with the author, 16 November 2016, London.
[38] British Army representative, telephone interview with the author, 7 April 2020, London.
[39] Anthony Mangnall MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Committee on the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative. 'Written Evidence EUA0021 - Effectiveness of UK AID'. (House of Commons International Development Committee, 2020). Published 15 May 2020. https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/3276/html/, accessed 7 July 2020.
[40] *Ibid.*
[41] FCO representative 2.
[42] For a comprehensive discussion on military assistance in Africa, see Marco Jowell. *Peacekeeping in Africa: Politics, Security and the Failure of Foreign*. (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2018).

from countries including Kenya, Ethiopia, Malawi and Uganda and supported the delivery of human security training (incorporating CRSV and SEA) through modules on other training packages, resulting in over 3,000 people representing 26 different African countries being exposed to awareness-level training.[43] These statistics are impressive. Yet monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of training packages is a challenge and BPST(A) does not follow up on how their training is implemented in practice in UN-AU missions or once trainees return to their TCC.[44]

Since the appointment of two Kenyan gender advisors in 2018, BPST(A)'s ability to support implementing AU WPS priorities has increased. Individual staff members within AU headquarters and AU in-country teams have welcomed this technical expertise. Among other activities, the gender advisors have been involved in developing the gender training programme for AU's Civilian Rostering focal persons to ensure gender balance in the recruitment of mediators, peacebuilders and, it is hoped, civilian peacekeepers from the open market and is participating in the AU's review of the *AU Gender Training Manual for AU Peace Support* (2013).[45] However, much of this work continues to be conducted on an ad hoc basis, and gender is not mainstreamed across all BPST(A) activities nor indeed, regarded as a priority at the strategic level within BPST(A). Instead, BPST(A) leadership has concentrated efforts on establishing a Counter IED school. It is suggested that BPST(A) should engage more with the UK's Office of the Permanent Representative to the AU, as well as the AU's Peace and Security Department to ensure a more joined up approach to mainstreaming gender in peacekeeping training. With the gender advisors in post for 2 years, now would be a good time to undertake a review of progress made and to ascertain next steps for BPST(A).

Some innovative programming has been delivered through partnerships between AU and UK FCO in-country teams, though much of this work is dependent on the political will of personalities within British embassies, who bid directly for budgets from the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) and the Global Britain fund, as well as on the efforts of AU in-country staff to raise the profile of their work. For example, in 2019 the British Ambassador was approached by the AU in-country team to support them in establishing a co-training scheme to allow Somali National Armed Forces to partake in in-mission gender-sensitive human security training provided for AMISOM peacekeepers. The AU in-country team were grateful for the opportunity to access funding quickly without having to go through central AU bureaucracy and helping to raise the profile of the initiative with the Somalian government.[46] The UK also funded training for Somalia's first armed female unit, which was developed by the AU in-country team, in collaboration from a BPST(A) gender advisor. Separately, the British Military Advisory Training team (BMATT) is also engaged in in-country programmes that indirectly support gender responsive peacekeeping in Africa, for example by providing support for gendered security sector reform.

In support of AU WPS priorities and the work of the PSVI, the UK could take advantage of the BPST-A and BMATT activities to become a leader on incorporating survivor-centric approaches in UN-AU peace support operations at strategic, tactical and operational levels. This could involve working with CRSV survivor groups and female and male peacekeepers to produce gender-sensitive first responder training (incorporating engagement and communication) to ensure uniformed peacekeepers are better equipped to assist and respond to female and male survivors of CRSV.

[43] FCO representative 1

[44] Discussion at the international workshop 'Preparing African operational-level leaders to implement the Women, Peace and Security agenda in peacekeeping operations', University of Reading, Reading, 21 June 2018.

[45] AU representative 2.

[46] AU representative 3.

Peacekeeper deployments

In 2015, the UK pledged to deploy small contingents of tactical-level military peacekeepers to UN-AU missions. A small number of female military peacekeepers deployed to UNMISS between 2016 and 2018 and two of the officers in command were women. The Royal Engineers provided a supporting role in UNMISS, building a hospital and roads. British female peacekeepers reportedly took the initiative to provide self-defence training for local women in Malakal and Bentiu. The UK also deploys a gender advisor to MONUSCO. A small contingent of around 250 peacekeepers are deploying to United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in late 2020 and will engage in long-distance patrols. Women will constitute 5% of the fighting force and 3-4% of service roles during this deployment.[47] While the British Army is ensuring troops receive practical training on local leadership engagement, including with women leaders from the matriarchal Tuareg communities, gender issues are integrated into the training under the banner of the catch-all term 'human security', reflecting a broad reluctance within the MoD and British Army to fully embrace the term 'gender' in military strategy and its implementation.

Partnership working

At the level of policy implementation, staff in the AU's Peace Support Operations division would like more technical gender expertise to help fill the division's resource gaps. Giving the BPST(A)'s gender advisor an expanded role or funding a gender advisor for PSOD are two possible approaches suggested. The UK would in principle support such initiatives and respects the AU's preference to second African staff, but the AU would need to pitch to the UK and identify exactly what the person would do, in line with the UK's approach to partnership working.[48] This would first require AU staff to garner political support for gender mainstreaming initiatives at the highest levels within the Peace and Security Department. The UK is also cautious about funding positions in light of the recent claims regarding sexual harassment, discrimination and abuse within AU departments and divisions, and these issues would need to be addressed.

However, the UK will not be able to achieve its pro-gender foreign policy goals if funding for WPS and PSVI programming is reduced. The FCO/DFID merger, recent scrutiny of the redirection of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) budget to fund peacekeeping initiatives that do not directly support poverty reduction[49]; the impact the UK's declining Gross National Interest (GNI) on ODA spend and changing policy priorities amid the COVID-19 pandemic are placing existing programming under pressure. FCO staff engaged in implementing the AU-UK Strategic Partnership contend that a joined-up approach could strengthen existing programming and reduce frag, including programming supporting women's empowerment across all sectors and reduce fragmentation. One representative explained:

> The FCO/DFID merger opens up a new avenue for us to potentially engage with [regional bodies] and the UN. DFID has been quite country-focused and the AU was not regarded as an external partner to work with, especially as we [the UK] are not a member, are on the periphery and don't have influence. The decline on ODA means there is less money to spend in Africa. Working at the continental level could mitigate some of the losses of in-country programmes.

[47] British Army representative, conversation with the author, Kent, 5 October 2020.

[48] FCO representative 3

[49] See House of Commons International Development Committee. 'Effectiveness of UK aid: interim findings, Second Report of Session 2019–21'. (House of Commons, 2 June 2020).

Yet, among former DFID staff and across the broader UK aid sector, there are legitimate concerns that the FCO/DFID merger will see the politicisation of poverty reduction initiatives and the securitisation of development.

Conclusion

Supporting the implementation of gender responsive, people-centred peacekeeping in Africa offers a way for the UK to strengthen its bilateral relationship with the AU and achieve its normative goals. However, current programming is fragmented and does not fully align with the AU's own WPS priorities in peacekeeping, in particular providing a survivor-centric approach and supporting longer term programming to facilitate structural changes within security institutions engaged in peacekeeping and the securities institutions of host countries transitioning out of conflict. While the UK provides technical and financial support and is valued by staff located in both AU headquarters and in-country teams, much of this work is undertaken on an ad hoc basis with little strategic oversight. In light of the UK's requirement to strengthen its partnership with the AU, the PSVI team is considering how it can work more closely with the UK's Permanent Representative to the African Union in Addis Ababa.[50] However, a larger review of programming delivered through the CSSF and the PSVI budget and greater engagement with the AU, in particular with the Peace and Support Department and Peace Support Operations division, could enable the UK to further enhance its offering.

[50] FCO representative 2