

How can Action for Peacekeeping be a catalyst to advance the Women, Peace and Security Agenda?

The Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative, launched by the Secretary General in March 2018, aims at catalysing political will in support of making peace operations more effective. In the Declaration of Shared Commitments, signed by the Member States, there is a commitment to implement the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and its priorities focusing on female participation, integrating a gender perspective and increasing the number of civilian and uniformed women in peacekeeping at all levels.

Still there has not been sufficient advancement on the WPS agenda within the framework of A4P, so the question is; what are the necessary steps ahead?

About the event

On this topic, on 11 February 2020, the Challenges Forum International Secretariat (CIFIS), together with Folke Bernadotte Academy, hosted a webinar. A jumping point for discussion was the Challenges Forum [Policy Brief 2019:7](#) by [Lisa Sharland](#). The full webinar is available to watch [here](#) and this paper highlights the key points from the discussions, summarized by Fanny Wellén at the Challenges Forum International Secretariat.

Panelists:

- **Njoki R Kinyanjui**, Chief of Gender Unit & Senior Gender Adviser, Department of Peace Operations, United Nations
- **Lisa Sharland**, Challenges Forum Senior Advisor and Head of the International Program at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) in Canberra, Australia
- **Gabriela Elroy**, Head of the Women, Gender Equality and Youth Programme at the Folke Bernadotte Academy in Sweden

Chair:

- **Dr Björn Holmberg**, Director of CFIS

Moderator:

- **Maria Bedford**, Senior Officer at CFIS

An international partnership consisting of organizations from: Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Canada, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Russia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America, WFUNA

Challenges Forum International Secretariat is hosted by Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) - Swedish Agency for Peace, Security and Development

Key Points of Discussions

How can A4P advance the WPS Agenda and in what way?

Njoki R Kinyanjui noted that A4P is an instrumental framework as it frames the WPS agenda within the area of political solutions. The result of this is that women are seen as part of and central to the solution of complex conflicts and how to address the challenges.

Kinyanjui identified four key areas for action:

- Include the effective participation of women in decision making processes.
- Ensure that policies, plans and initiatives are gender responsive and include accountability measures to be able to track the progress.
- Increase the participation of women in both civilian as and uniformed roles in missions
- Integrate the WPS agenda in all other components and processes. Highlights the need to see women and their organizations as partners.

Kinyanjui emphasized that the framework is measurable and trackable. It includes 15 core indicators to track the implementation of the WPS agenda which can produce qualitative and quantitative data. The Challenges Forum Partnership has made the recommendation to gather, analyze and apply gender disaggregated data to advance the WPS agenda¹.

Lisa Sharland added that she considers that three stakeholders have a real opportunity to catalyze the WPS agenda through their A4P. In regards of the host countries she believes that women's participation in peace operations, and the international community advocating for this through the Security Council, might influence the participation of women in political processes at the national level. The police and troop contributing countries can, through A4P, catalyze the participation of women in the security sector. The UN can ensure that women are put into leadership roles in UN peace operations to seek gender equality and gender parity.

How can Member States increase women's participation in uniformed professions, like the police or military?

Sharland highlighted the need to look at how to retain women in defense and make sure that they stay in the organization. She advocated for creating an environment suitable for women which include looking at barriers. She sees a real incentive for the UN to make sure that it is engaging with Member States about addressing some of those barriers to women's participation in the military and security sector. This is reflected in the Challenges Forum Partnership's recommendation that Member States should undertake a comprehensive analysis of uniformed women's participation at different stages in the cycle of a peace operation to identify the barriers to their participation.

Are there specific roles assigned to women in peacekeeping missions?

¹ The recommendations come from the latest two Annual Forum and can be read [here](#)

Gabriela Elroy stated that women's participation on equal terms in peace operations is essential but does not think that women should have specific roles within missions. However, she said that there is a tendency to put forward arguments that women serve specific purposes within peace operations. This relies on an underlying bias –men's added-value in peace missions is never highlighted, just women's. Female participation in peace operations she considers to be a matter of rights.

The moderator developed her initial question and made reference to statements made by the Secretary General² and asked if the panelists see any advantages or risks for the role of women's roles within peace operations with reference to these statements?

Elroy cautioned that there has been little evidence and research that has confirmed these statements. On the contrary, research has shown that it is values of gender equality within the mission and not the presence of women per se that make a difference³. She expressed concerns about the burden these statements put on women in missions and what happens when the participation of women in peace operations fails at demonstrating the promised effects.

Sharland echoed that sentiment, however, Sharland highlighted that there are audiences who do not accept a rights-based approach. She suggested to make sure to engage a broad audience, especially when addressing peace keeping stakeholders and partnerships. She states that this sometimes means to use instrumental arguments since within the security sector there tend to be a focus on effectiveness.

Kinyanjui pointed to the need to redefine the meaning of participation because she believes that it has been relegated to just representation and therefore has ended up into a numbers game which has led to at women being seen as vulnerable and in need of help instead of part of the process. She states that women are plunged into systems that are not open to them and identifies a need to change the political and security systems as well as power relations. Kinyanjui agreed with Elroy that instrumental statements rely on anecdotal information and asked for more research. She also highlighted the need to work on strengthening accountability - holding leaders accountable for the WPS agenda within all stakeholders and at all levels.

This is something that is reflected in the Challenges Forum Partnerships recommendations⁴ which highlights the need to analyze gender disaggregated data across UN peace operations at different phases of missions in order to identify women's roles and contributions to peace operations.

Are there synergies between the rights based approach and the instrumentalist approach - if they can support one another?

² "The presence of women at checkpoints has been credited with promoting a less confrontational atmosphere, and more women in troop contingents is credited with higher reporting of sexual and gender-based violence and lower incidences of sexual exploitation and abuse." Citation from the SG's remarks to the Security Council on Women in Peacekeeping, available [here](#).

³ Elroy makes a reference to research made by Sabrina Karim

⁴ <https://www.challengesforum.org/paper/challenges-forum-consolidated-recommendations-to-advance-the-action-for-peacekeeping-a4p-agenda/>

Sharland is of the opinion that these approaches are not mutually exclusive and should not be pitted against each other. She highlights the need to engage along the broad spectrum encountered when talking about WPS and to focus on the result – gender equality. The Chair of the webinar, Dr Björn Holmberg, highlighted the need to consider the local context and the structures that are barriers for women’s participation. Elroy emphasized that it is possible to maintain a right based approach and be constructive at the same time. One way to do that, according to her, is to point at the disadvantages that comes with gender inequality.

What are the biggest challenges and opportunities that you see facing gender advisors within missions and do you think it differentiate between civilian and uniformed advisors?

Kinyanjui stated that gender advisors are essential. They need to be at the right level and location to have an impact. The biggest challenges she identifies are rotation of personnel and lack of resources. Sharland highlighted that gender advisors on the ground have the opportunity of taking part in planning a mission and make sure that the local context and women are considered and collecting gender aggregated data. She points to the challenge of making gender not only a responsibility of the gender advisor but make it a shared responsibility across the whole mission, as well as holding everyone accountable.

The Challenges Forum Partnership has in its recommendations highlighted the need of gender advisors throughout mandating and budgetary processes, and mission leadership should be held accountable for their effective utilization of these posts in the field.⁵

After the discussions a Q&A session followed where the audience could chat questions to the panelists. Due to the scope of this paper this part will not be summarized but can be viewed in the video recording of the webinar found [here](#).

Ways ahead

Elroy stated that this is the time to gather the strength and courage to actually stand up for gender equality as a core value in itself that has both principle value but also operational value. Sharland rounded up with three points. First, A4P has set the roadmap but a lot of challenges still persist and looking at implementation is key. Second, the discussion of WPS need to take place among the broader community, not just among experts. Third, civil society needs to be engaged.

Kinyanjui highlighted the value of traditional and non-traditional partnership to ensure that the WPS agenda is well understood so everyone all can pull in the same direction and use evidence-based arguments for achieving gender equality.

The Webinar demonstrates the need to continue the dialogue on how A4P can advance the WPS agenda but also demonstrates the opportunities that exist to do so for A4P.

⁵ <https://www.challengesforum.org/paper/challenges-forum-consolidated-recommendations-to-advance-the-action-for-peacekeeping-a4p-agenda/>