



Challenges Forum

International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations



ANNUAL OPERATIONAL REPORT 2020

Shaping the Debate and Promoting Collaboration through Innovative Platforms in Times of a Pandemic

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Challenges Forum is a global partnership that uses its convening power to generate innovative ideas and promote results for more effective peace operations.

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Acknowledgements

Looking back at the year of 2020, multilateral efforts for a more peaceful world have been more successful than many analysts predicted in the beginning of the year. This positive development in an otherwise gloomy outlook, has to do with our collective determination to continue to serve those who are affected by conflict and those who are deployed in peace operations. Innovative digital solutions on how we meet and communicate have been key to this positive development. The Challenges Forum Partnership is not an exception. We already used innovative digital platforms to collaborate within the Partnership and with external key stakeholders before the Covid-19 pandemic.

In 2020 we accelerated those efforts, for example by arranging several webinars on cutting-edge topics that received broad global response from Partner organizations and key stakeholders like the UN and the AU. We furthermore held the first time ever virtual Challenges Annual Forum that represented a very inclusive and diverse group of participants, enabled by the digital format. However, a virtual Challenges Annual Forum can never completely replace a physical meeting where we get to build relationships of trust and widen our networks. In the planning of future Forums, we will make sure that all lessons learnt from the 2020 virtual Forum are incorporated.

The Challenges Forum International Secretariat (CFIS) and the Challenges Forum are grateful for Partners' engagement and critical input throughout 2020. We are especially thankful to



the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), South Africa; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia; and the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI) for generously leading and hosting the successful virtual Challenges Annual Forum 2020. I would also like to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Global Affairs Canada (GAC), the Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF), Germany, and the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), South Africa, for their invaluable advice as members in the 2022-2021 Partner Organizations' Advisory Committee (POAC), the advisory body of the Challenges Forum Partnership and the CFIS.

Furthermore, on behalf of the Challenges Forum Partners and the CFIS team, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the FBA, the host of the International Secretariat for providing resources and support for the development and operations of CFIS in 2020. Motivated by the need to invest in multilateral collaboration in a world with increasing tensions, FBA amplified their support to CFIS. This has been instrumental in furthering the work of the Partnership. In addition, we also wish to thank FBA's Director-General Sven-Eric Söder, who charitably chairs the Partner Meeting, and we wish to thank Director Johanna Gårdmark and Deputy Director Lisa Orrenius, Department for Peace Operations, Leadership and Gender, FBA, for their generous support of CFIS daily work.

I would moreover like to thank my brave, dedicated and resourceful CFIS colleagues for making exceptional contributions to the Challenges Forum Partnership and our common cause. Finally, it is with great sadness that I serve my last months as a Director of the Challenges Forum Partnership. It has been an unforgettable journey, where I have gotten the chance to meet and work together with extremely inspiring and experienced professionals. I am certain that our paths will cross in the years to come and it is with great confidence that I look forward to following the continued successful work of the Challenges Forum.

Dr. Björn Holmberg
Director
International Secretariat of the Challenges Forum

Executive Summary

This report presents the Challenges Forum's key operational results for 2020. Results have been divided into four strategic objectives which are presented in chapter two. The strategic objectives emanate from the [Challenges Forum Strategy 2019–2023](#).

The Challenges Forum's first strategic objective relates to support to ongoing reforms and developments of the UN peace, security and development architecture to increase the effectiveness, performance and efficiency of peace operations.

The Challenges Annual Forum, the partnership's flagship event, was held in a virtual format for the first time. Three Partner organizations co-hosted the Forum this year: the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in South Africa, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI). The Annual Forum attracted over 180 participants from 45 organizations in over 25 countries. Against a background of global challenges characterized by polarization and fragmentation compounded by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the Forum examined how to sustain effective peace operations within this changing global landscape. As in previous Annual Forums, the discussions have generated recommendations on how to increase the effectiveness, performance and efficiency of peace operations.

In January, CFIS together with ZIF Berlin facilitated a workshop for field staff from more than 10 missions in Entebbe, Uganda. The purpose was to promote greater understanding, reflection and ownership of Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) at the mission level. Throughout the year, the Challenges Forum also held a number of webinars on a wide range of topics that attracted hundreds of participants from all over the globe.

Challenges Forum's second strategic objective is supporting more effective mission leadership and management.

In 2020, focus has been on undertaking a scoping and feasibility study on the development of a leadership e-toolkit with the view to design learning solutions in a structured, intentional, and learner-centric way. Building on the findings of the study, CFIS developed a plan for how to take forward the development of the e-toolkit and the overall strategic objective of more effective leadership. The revised edition of the Considerations for Leadership in UN Peace Operations was furthermore completed in a consultative process with partners, the project's Senior Advisory Group, the UN Secretariat and other key stakeholders. Both the printed and online publications will be available in 2021.

Challenge Forum's third strategic objective is to foster an inclusive and engaged partnership.

In April 2020, CFIS organized the first virtual meeting of the Challenges Forum Expert Group on Emerging Issues, which over the year has attracted the active participation of 10–12 Challenges Forum Partners from all continents. Following the initial gathering to define role and purpose, (building on the Challenges Forum Strategy 2109–2023), ZIF hosted an Expert Group meeting on Digital Technologies and Peace Operations, ISS a meeting on UN-AU Peacebuilding Partnership, and CFIS on the development of an E-tool to Support Senior Mission Leadership and Management in Peace Operations.

It can be concluded that the year of 2020, despite the Covid-19 Pandemic, was a year with very meaningful engagement from a wide range of Challenges Forum Partners and a year where international key stakeholders have requested and needed an impartial space for dialogue between key stakeholders in peace operations.

¹ In section Results in 2020, we also use the concept "Outcome" for "Strategic objective". This is Results-based management terminology and refers to higher-level results manifested through individual or organisational change in the target group. That is, "strategic objectives" and "outcomes" are synonymous in this report and CFIS uses internationally accepted RBM terminology based on UN and OECD-DAC definitions.

Results in 2020

In this section, a brief summary on results-based (RBM) methodology and the Challenges Forum's take on this is provided for those readers new to this management methodology. Then follows five sections, one per strategic objective and one additional section on the strengthening of the CFIS, following up on the results. For a more detailed account on activities, please refer to the Challenges Forum web page or write to CFIS to receive a copy of the RBM report from our management platform.

1. Methodology and Approach Managing for Results

This report aims to summarize the 2020 results of the Challenges Forum International Secretariat (CFIS) and its support to the Challenges Forum Partners in delivering outputs and achieving strategic objectives (outcomes). It takes its point of departure in the Strategy for 2019–2023. For those with knowledge of results-based management (RBM) and the goals of Challenges Forum, please proceed to the next page on results. Otherwise, this page provides an overview of the CFIS RBM system and how we relate activities and deliverables to our overarching goals.

The **overarching aim** or impact of the Challenges Forum as defined in its **vision** is sustainable peace, strengthened through effective peace operations and multilateral peace operation partnerships.

The **general approach** to achieving the overarching aim is defined in our **mission**, which guides the strategic orientation of the Challenges Forum and the CFIS. The mission of the Challenges Forum is to use its convening power as a global partnership to generate innovative ideas and promote results for more effective peace operations.

Strategic objectives, or outcomes as they are called in this results-based management section of the Annual Operational Report, are long-term expected results for 2023 and beyond. They indicate increased organisational capacity or changes to organisational behaviour. Hence, they are not only dependent on the Challenges Forum Partners and the CFIS, but they are influenced by different international actors and processes driving change. Nevertheless, some outcomes are internal to the Challenges Forum as they intend to strengthen our global partnership. The higher-level outcomes are called **strategic objectives/outcomes**. There are furthermore immediate-level outcomes that define the Challenges Forum's direct influence. Immediate outcomes are dependent on the outputs and activities executed by the Challenges Forum Partnership and the CFIS. There are two external outcomes related to what the Challenges Forum wants to change and there are three internal outcomes on how to strengthen the Challenges Forum Partnership itself.

In the RBM management system, all outcomes are given a brief assessment of completion or indicated to what degree the outputs related to

the outcomes have been achieved. Following UN and OECD-DAC definitions in RBM terminology, CFIS defines the following and above concepts accordingly:

Outputs are concrete deliverables by the CFIS and the Challenges Forum Partners during 2020, for example an Annual Forum or a publication. Outputs are indicated with an estimated percentage completion.

Key activities are actions by the CFIS to support the Challenges Forum Partners to achieve outputs and, in turn, the expected outcomes and strategic objectives. A detailed account of key activities are not present in this Executive Annual Operational Report, but can be retrieved from CFIS.

FIGURE 1:
Example of Challenges Forum’s Results-based Framework to implement the Strategy



2. Results per Strategic Objectives in 2020

2.1. Strategic Objective 1: Effective Reform of Peace Operations



Overall Progress in delivering the outcome related outputs of supporting effective development and reforms of UN peace operations



» Overall, the results are very positive and the CFIS implemented almost all outputs (80%)². The CFIS has supported the Challenges Partnership (CF), in collaboration with the UN, in providing a platform for dialogue on the UN Secretary General's Action for Peacekeeping (A4P), and in generating substantive recommendations on the implementation of A4P to key actors.

Overview of Outputs

In support of the effective implementation of the development and reform of UN peace operations, Challenges Forum organized a number of platforms for dialogue and innovation, many of which were co-hosted by our partners. Ownership of the partnership is a key indicator for its success and relevance, and CFIS continue to encourage Challenges Forum partners to co-host our dialogue platforms.

Throughout the year, Challenges Forum managed to attract key stakeholders in the UN, regional organizations, member states and academia to participate in our dialogue platforms. According to many partner organizations, the Challenges Forum remained one

of the most important global platforms for dialogue on peace operations.

Challenges Forum organized a working lunch meeting in the margins of the UN General Assembly's Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34) in February 2020, co-hosted by the Permanent Missions of Egypt, Indonesia and Sweden to sustain the momentum for a holistic implementation of the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) commitments. The event was well attended at Ambassadorial and senior levels and it strengthened the Forum as a key platform for policy dialogue. It increased the Forum's visibility and relevance among key actors and built support for our key recommendations.

² For details, please request the output/key activity report from CFIS info@challengesforum.org



Lunch Meeting in the margins of C-34 in February 2020. From the top left corner: H.E. Ambassador Akuei Bona Malwal, South Sudan, Mr Robert Piper, Assistant Secretary-General (ASG), Development Coordination Office, Ms Barrie Freeman, Director and Deputy Head, the Officer-in-Charge of the Peace building Support Office, Ms Rania Dagash, Deputy Director of The Policy, Evaluation and Training Division (DPET), Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPO), Mr Micheal Kingsley-Nyinah, Director, African Division, DPO, Mr Victor Casanova Abos, Lead Author of the SCR Report on Prioritized & Sequenced Mandate, Ambassador Ihab Awad - Moustafa, Deputy Assistant Foreign Ministers United Nations, Affairs, Arab Republic of Egypt, Ambassador Richard Arbeiter, Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada.



The Virtual Challenges Annual Forum 2020 (VCAF20) was attended by 180 participants from 45 organizations in over 25 countries.

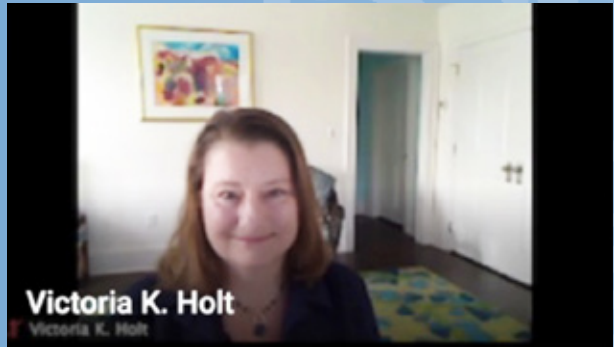
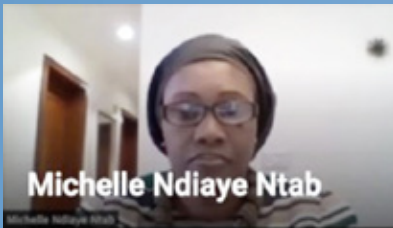
The Challenges Annual Forum 2020, co-hosted by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in South Africa, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI), was held virtually on 7-11 December 2020. Some 180 participants from 45 organizations in over 25 countries, including the UN, AU, academia and think tanks took part in the virtual dialogue. The theme for the Annual Forum was “Framing Peace Operations in a Changing Global Landscape”.

The Annual Forum provided a platform to examine existing challenges to peace operations, exchange views and discuss recommendations to ensure peace operations remain positioned to adapt to the changing needs on the ground. Against a background of global challenges characterized by polarization and fragmentation compounded by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, this year’s Annual Forum examined how to sustain effective peace operations within this changing global landscape. It explored these issues through a series of plenary sessions with a range of speakers, including Ministers and current and former officials from the UN and AU. The Forum engaged the participants in discussions on three cumulative dialogues led by each of the co-hosts: the African Union-UN partnership (ISS); peacebuilding and sustaining

peace (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesia); and the performance and effectiveness of peace operations (NUPI). The consultations identified opportunities to strengthen collective engagement and political support to improve peace operations. One of the key outcomes of the 2020 virtual Challenges Annual Forum was the formulation of actionable policy recommendations on ‘how’ to make peace operations more effective in this global context, while also identifying which actors would be best positioned to take forward such reforms. Please find the [Challenges Annual Forum 2020 report and its recommendations here](#).

Throughout the year, CFIS facilitated a number of webinars on a wide range of topics, including ‘Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda in Peace Operations’ (February); ‘Future of Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order’ (April); ‘Regional organizations and political missions: cross-regional learning in fostering peacebuilding’ (May) as part of the Stockholm Forum on Peace and Security; and ‘Improving peace-keeping effectiveness by increasing diversity of mission composition’ (October).

Due to the prevailing Covid-19 context, CFIS was not able to organize roundtables in collaboration with A4P Champions in 2020.



Webinar on ‘the Changing Global Order and the Future of Peace Operations’. From the left top corner: Michelle Ndiaye Ntab, Director Africa Peace and Security Programme (APSP) African Union / Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) Addis Ababa University, David Haeri, Director, Division for Policy, Evaluation and Training (DPET), UNDP, Cedric de Coning, Senior Research Fellow, (NUPI), Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Challenges Forum Patron, Victoria K. Holt, Vice President, The Henry L. Stimson Center.



Webinar on ‘Regional Organizations and Political Missions: Cross-regional Learning in fostering peacebuilding’ at the 2020 Virtual Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development. From left: Borja Paladini Adell Residence Fellow at the Peace Research Institute of Oslo leading the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network’s (EPON) evaluation of the UN Special Political Mission in Colombia, Dr. Roselyn Akombe Chief of Policy, United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and Gustavo de Carvalho, Senior Researcher, Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in Pretoria, South Africa.

UN DPO's Entebbe workshop in January 2020 for UN mission field staff. Facilitated by UN DPO, ZIF Berlin and CFIS.

ACTION FOR PEACEKEEPING



In January, at the request of UN DPO's Division for Policy, Evaluation and Training, CFIS together with the Center for International Cooperation (ZIF), facilitated a workshop for field staff from more than 10 missions in Entebbe, Uganda, with the purpose of promoting greater understanding, reflection and ownership of Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) at the mission level. Apart from guiding the missions in how to implement A4P in the field, the participants also shared valuable experiences and ideas on opportunities and challenges in A4P areas such as Political Solutions, WPS and Performance.

Immediate Outcome Result: **Key stakeholders use the Challenges Forum platform and integrate its recommendation into development and reforms of peace operations**

Throughout the year, CFIS managed to attract key stakeholders in the UN, regional organizations, member states and academia. As part of its methodology, CFIS has applied the cumulative approach anchoring and building dialogue strands on previous recommendations made by the Partnership. One example of this is the Forum's April webinar that, according to the UN DPO/DPET, helped kick-start UN internal reflections on the future of peace operations. Another example is the opening video remarks at the Challenges Annual Forum 2020, where Norway's Minister of Foreign Affairs highlighted taking forward the Forum's recommendations during their tenure on the UN Security Council.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, all dialogue platforms were organized virtually from March onwards. This provided opportunities for the Challenges Forum, including reaching

a wider audience, as many webinars were well attended with sometimes over 300 participants, as well as reducing the carbon footprint. In this regard, the Challenges Forum will continue to organize virtual events in the future. Of course, many of our partners have indicated that they miss the social interaction of in-person events and dialogue platforms. We have tried to address this through meeting regularly and through e.g. holding virtual mingles at the end of every day during our Challenges Annual Forum. However, together with our partners and the entire world, we express our hope on a return to normalcy in the course of 2021.

2021 is a special year in which our partnership will celebrate its 25th anniversary together with the Annual Forum. CFIS is taking into account alternative scenarios and contingencies due to the development of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The partnership will continue to provide dialogue platforms on the reform of peace operations, building on our Annual Forum and ongoing policy shifts in peace operations in support of the effective implementation of the A4P agenda. But also in support of the ongoing reform of the UN Peace and Security Pillar, and the smart use of the full spectrum of peace operations, including special political missions and peacebuilding efforts.

Lastly, together with our experts and consultants, CFIS will continue to support the production of light, purpose driven and innovative publications on development and reform of peace operations.

2.2. Strategic Objective 2: More effective Mission Leadership and Management



Overall Progress in delivering the outcome related outputs of the senior mission leadership work

90%
Outputs
achieved

- » Overall, the leadership work strand has made significant progress. The Challenges Forum Partnership will be able to provide a top-notch toolkit for senior- and mid-level leadership in peace operations through the revised Considerations Study and the e-platform. A scoping and feasibility study was carried out which gave a clear direction for how to best develop the e-tool, within the resource constraints.

Overview of Outputs

In 2020, the work strand on strengthening leadership and management in peace operations focused on three main areas: i) finalization of the Considerations Study, ii) planning the development of the leadership e-toolkit, and iii) organizing dialogue events on leadership issues. This work strand reached an important milestone. Following an iterative and consultative process with Partners, the project's Senior Advisory Group, the UN Secretariat and other key stakeholders, the revised edition of the Considerations for Leadership in UN Peace Operations was completed. Both the printed and online publications will be available in 2021. Considerations will be a critical guide for mission leaders – providing an overview of the main tasks facing peace operations, and some of the challenges and dilemmas mission leadership may need to balance in implementing prioritized and sequenced mandates.

During the reporting year, CFIS in collaboration with hybrid pedagogy experts undertook a scoping and feasibility study on the development of the leadership e-toolkit, with the view to design learning solutions in a structured, intentional and learner-centric way. The scoping study, in part based on focused interviews with former and currently serving mission leaders, noted that an e-toolkit would be a strong complement to the existing Considerations and serve as a critical resource to mission leaders. Building on the findings of the study, CFIS developed a plan for how to take forward the development of the e-toolkit and the overall strategic objective of more effective leadership and management over the 2021–2023 strategy period.

The CF Expert Group and POAC discussed and approved the operational plan. In addition to internal partnership discussions, CFIS also



Open webinar on peacekeeping effectiveness and mission diversity with panelists Lt Gen (Retired) Alberto dos Santos Cruz, Dr Chiara Ruffa, Richard Gowan, and Gabriella Seymour.

organized an open webinar titled “Improving Peacekeeping Effectiveness by Increasing Diversity in Mission Composition” in October 2020. The webinar explored different dimensions of diversity, including diversity within mission leadership teams, and the impact on the functioning of a mission and delivery of mission mandates.

Immediate Outcome Result:
Key stakeholders have further integrated Challenges leadership guidance into their planning, execution, and evaluation of peace operations.

At the immediate outcome level, much remains as is, with change expected to happen over the coming several years. Owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, many multilateral training programmes, including the UN’s Senior Mission Leadership (SML) programme, were suspended. The UN Secretariat also revisited the format of its SML programme to better leverage online tools. It is expected that both the Considerations e-book and forthcoming e-toolkit could more concretely contribute to the SML and potentially other leadership training programmes. Nevertheless, the close collaboration with the UN Department

for Peace Operations (DPO), their review and support of the Considerations Study, and the commitment of DPO’s Under-Secretary-General Lacroix in the study’s foreword to use it in UN leadership courses, are strong process indicators.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

The Covid-19 pandemic allowed CFIS to hunker down and finalize the revision of Considerations, and place more emphasis on planning for the development of the e-toolkit and future work on the leadership strand. However, it also limited the ability to engage in meaningful face-to-face outreach efforts with partners and external stakeholders such as the AU, to explore how Considerations and the accompanying e-toolkit could be better used in peace operations.

In 2021, CFIS will focus on the roll-out of the revised edition of Considerations, strengthening outreach efforts to Partners (albeit virtually, and face-to-face meetings where situation allows) to promote greater utilization of Considerations, as well as the completion of Phase 1 of the e-toolkit development.

2.3. Strategic Objective 3: The Challenges Forum Partnership engaging in collaborative action



Overall Progress in delivering the outcome related outputs of engaging partners in collaborate actions



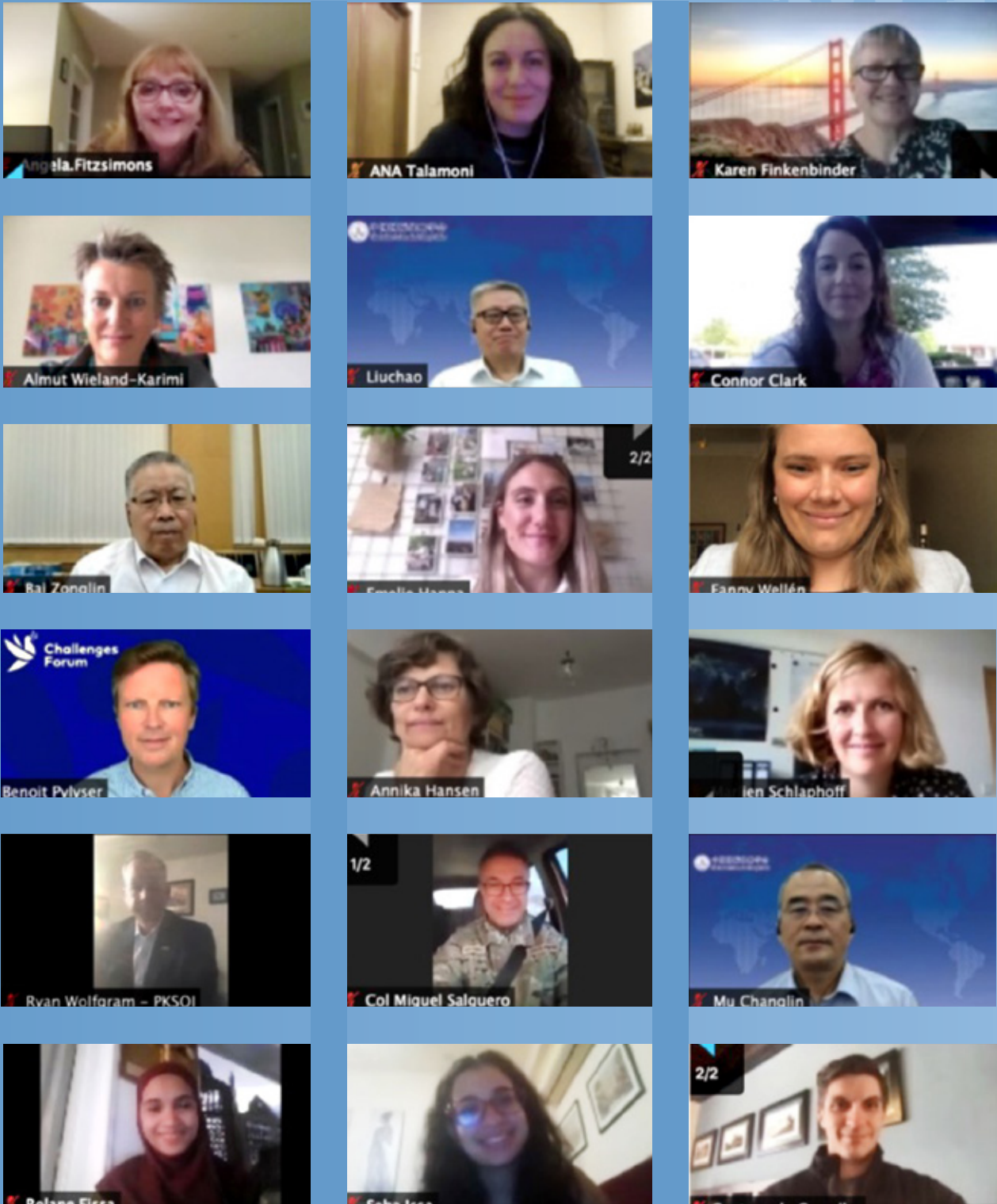
- » Overall, rather positive results were achieved, especially given the limitations of Covid-19. Being a forum for dialogue and interaction, the lack of physical meetings and the need for digitalization put steep demands on the Partnership to adapt. Nevertheless, having started the digitalization in 2018, Challenges Forum was able to convene new members of the Partner Organizations' Advisory Committee (POAC), operationalize the Expert Group on Emerging Issues with four meetings in 2020, engage various Partners in webinars with strong global attendance and collaborate with three partners as co-hosts in the Partnership's first virtual Annual Forum – VCAF20. Positively, the partnership expanded to 51 partners in 24 countries, confirmed in early 2021, and CFIS continues dialogue with potential new partners. Unfortunately, Covid-19 restricted CFIS to visit partners in their home countries, which is a much-needed outreach to plan for 2021/2022.

Overview of Outputs

With the view to strengthen the Challenges Forum Partnership, efforts continued to engage the Challenges Forum 51 partners in 24 countries. Important to note is that all activities were gender mainstreamed, both regarding thematic focus and regarding meaningful participation. The Partnership Organizations' Advisory Committee (POAC) was renewed for a 2-year mandate period and it played a key role in advising strategic decision-making and in the implementation of the strategy 2019–2023. Furthermore, CFIS, POAC and the Partnership also benefited from advice from our Patron, Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, former UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. The 2020–2021 POAC is comprised of the

Institute for Security Studies (ISS), South Africa, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Global Affairs Canada and the Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF), Germany. CFIS Director, Dr. Björn Holmberg has been the chair of the committee.

In April 2020, the Challenges Forum Expert Group on Emerging Issues was established, which over the year has attracted the active participation of 10–12 Challenges Forum Partners from all continents. Subsequent meetings were respectively hosted by: ZIF on Digital Technology and Peace Operations, ISS on AU–UN Peacebuilding Partnership, and CFIS on the development of an E-tool to Support Senior Mission Leadership and Management in Peace Operations.



Challenges Forum Expert Group Meeting hosted by ZIF on Digital Technology and Peace Operations. Among the participants and contributors to the meeting were: China Institute for International Strategic Studies (CISS), the Australian Civil-Military Centre (ACMC) Centro Argentino de Entrenamiento Conjunto para Operaciones de Paz (CAECOPAZ), the United States Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI), Cairo Regional Center for Training on Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa (CCCPA), US State Department and the Institute of Security Studies (ISS).

The Partnership was also happy to welcome its newest member, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uruguay in early 2021, as the result of a dialogue in 2019-2020. Knowing Uruguay's long history of dedicated contribution to UN peace operations, CFIS and partners look forward to collaborating with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uruguay and other institutions in Uruguay. Furthermore, dialogue on a possible future membership continued with key stakeholders in Rwanda.

Due to the Covid pandemic, the CFIS was not able to visit partners, aside from a visit to Washington in February 2020. This has been a hurdle for understanding the interest of our membership. Nevertheless, through bilateral outreach, virtual dialogues and seminars, the Partner meeting and surveys, CFIS has a rather clear picture of key interests of our Partnership. In 2021/2022, when conditions are conducive and the pandemic is more controlled, CFIS will re-initiate visits to partners.

Outcome Result: The Challenges Forum Partnership is fostering an inclusive and creative approach to change management by engaging in collaborative action

Just like 2019, the year 2020 provided an extraordinary example of collative and collaborative actions. In spite of limitations in travel due to Covid, there was a strong and global engagement from the partnership to discuss opportunities and challenges to peace operations in the newly organized Challenges Forum Expert Group on Emerging Issues. In addition, the Partnership was able to organize a virtual Annual Forum (VCAF20), with more than 200 participants throughout the week (see details under Strategic Objective 1). Being the first of its kind, VCAF20 would not have been possible without the collective and generous investments by the three co-hosts: the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), South Africa; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia; and the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). In the opening ceremony, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia and of Norway spoke. The fact that Indonesia has engaged the Challenges

Forum in the UN Security Council in 2019, and Norway this year as a current member in the UN Security Council, is a strong indicator of Partners' commitments towards collaborative actions.

The Challenges Forum has furthermore continued to raise the Women, Peace and Security agenda and gender mainstreamed the representation of participants and panellists in our events. Finally, prior to the pandemic in February, the Permanent Missions of Egypt, Indonesia and Sweden to the UN; organized a working lunch at the UN in New York to discuss A4P and share recommendations from CAF19 and Aswan Forum (see details under Outcome 1).

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Initially when creating POAC and then the Expert Group on Emerging Issues, the purpose was to strengthen collaborative action and to increase transparency within the Challenges Forum, (see governance figure below). Nevertheless, there was some hesitation from CFIS whether or not Partners would have time to engage. This concern seems to have been unwarranted, as the willingness of many Partners to engage in our collaborative work has exceeded expectations, which is an important lesson regarding the strength of our global network. Hence, in 2021 and ahead, as long as Partners deem thematic focus relevant, they are likely to stay engaged and value the Challenges Form platform and its potential to stimulate change in peace operation policy and practice. The pandemic will continue to be a challenge, but in 2020, partner interaction was stronger than expected due to the digitalization efforts by CFIS. However, this will not replace the physical meetings that are needed for building and sustaining an impartial dialogue platform built on trust.



2.4. Strategic Objective 4: The Challenges Forum Partnership has increased its influence



Overall Progress in delivering the outcome related outputs for strengthening Challenges Forum's influence

90%
Outputs
achieved

- » The overall results are satisfying and according to the objectives of the strategic plan, despite the difficulties to perform the activities as planned initially due to COVID-19. Strategic Communication was strengthened, with the new Communication Strategy for the partnership being launched, and the exploration of digital platforms took a step forward.

Overview of Outputs

2020 will be remembered as the year when the pandemic made physical encounters nearly impossible but encouraged us to explore virtual ways of increasing the Challenges Forum's influence. The earlier explorations of Zoom platforms were further developed this year, as Challenges Forum organized a number of virtual events, including its first ever virtual Annual Forum (VCAF20) as described in section 2.1. All of these events were opportunities for the Challenges Forum to increase the partnership's influence with key stakeholders. Bilateral meetings with the UN Secretariat took place both virtually and when CFIS visited the US in the beginning of the year.

Notwithstanding the downside of missed opportunities to meet in person and engage in informal conversations, several partners highlighted the upside of meeting virtually. In addition to reducing long-haul travel and visa

issues, it made the virtual Challenges Annual Forum more accessible and easier to attend. Seizing this opportunity to a larger extent than previous years, the first and final day of the VCAF20 was opened up to the public.

During the VCAF20, different innovative formats were explored. The foreign ministers of our co-hosts' countries, key stakeholders and experts were invited to produce short video messages to create synergies and strengthen our ability to influence the debate. This resulted in 14 videos, which will also be used to strengthen the post-forum communication.

The Challenges Forum Consolidated Recommendations were launched during the lunch event in the margins of C34 (see section 2.1). This was part of an effort to collect previous recommendations and structure them around A4P, in order to communicate the recommendations to key stakeholders and enhance their impact.



Above: The Challenges Forum webpage is now also available in French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian and Chinese

Left: A communication strategy for the partnership has been developed through input from Challenges Forum Partners and POAC.

The Challenges Forum Consolidated Recommendations were launched during the lunch event in the margins of C34 (see section 2.1). This was part of an effort to collect previous recommendations and structure them around A4P, in order to communicate the recommendations to key stakeholders and enhance their impact.

As part of the efforts to strengthen the partnership's strategic communication - and thereby increase its influence - one of the main deliverables was the development of a Challenges Forum Communication Strategy. The Strategy was developed with the help of partner organizations who shared their ideas and input at the previous partner meeting 2019, and with the help of POAC members. The Partner meeting wasn't held until January 2021, resulting in the Communication Strategy being adopted later than intended. The implementation of the Communication Strategy will therefore continue in 2021.

Other activities to strengthen the partnership's influence involved the finalisation of the new Challenges forum website, with the overall information now available in French, Spanish,

Arabic, Russian and Chinese. The focus on communication activities through Challenges Forum's three social media platforms was also intensified, with a focus on Twitter as being the most efficient way to interact with partners. The trimestral newsletters continued to provide the partnership with a light and sharp summary of the Challenges Forum's activities, while promoting participation and transparency.

Outcome Result:

The Challenges Forum Partnership has increased its influence on UN, regional organizations, and Member States regarding peace operations policy and practice

The real outcome result needs to be measured through more refined indicators capturing long-term change of influence. Nevertheless, the Challenges Forum partnership has managed to keep an influence on the debate on peace operations, despite the absence of physical meetings during the year. This was manifested by a high attendance at both our virtual Annual Forum as well as at public webinars. The participant lists also indicate that we indeed managed to attract a wide range of key stakeholders. Another indicator of our ability to

influence is the high engagement by speakers to be involved in high-level conversations, which shows their value of Challenges Forum as an informal platform for dialogue.

Other means of appreciation of the Challenges Forum as an influencer on peace operations was the invitation to facilitate the UN's A4P workshop for field missions organized by DPET in Entebbe, Uganda. Another sign of appreciation was the invitation from the Permanent Missions of Egypt, Indonesia and Sweden to co-organize the high-level ambassadorial lunch dialogue session at the UN Headquarters, in the margins of the 2020 Special Committee on Peacekeeping (C-34).

During the year, our social media activities have gained a wide coverage. Opening up some of the events to the general public supported a high engagement rate in our social media channels both before, during and after the activities. During the month of December, our tweets reached close to 93,000 impressions. UN DPO has also suggested collaboration with Challenges Forum on several communication

efforts, for example for Peacekeepers Day, which indicates their appreciation for the Challenges Forum as a platform for influencing the debate on peace operations.

Lessons learned and Next Steps

Engaging the Partners in the implementation of the Communication Strategy will continue in 2021. A lesson learned from 2020 is that Challenges Forum would benefit from contracting a communication agency that could support with content and visual production for our communication in social media. These channels have been highlighted as important avenues for strategic communication by our partners, and the COVID-19 context has furthered the need of high-quality content.

In order to make information more accessible for Partners and key stakeholders, a continuous development of the website will be carried out to make the site more user-friendly and information more accessible. CFIS will also continue to enhance the partnership's virtual platforms for dialogue and innovative ideas.

2.5. Strategic Objective 5: CFIS institutionalised



Overall Progress in delivering the outcome related outputs institutionalizing CFIS



- » This strategic objective is internal to CFIS and is not part of the Challenges Forum Strategy. Hosting CFIS, FBA has been instrumental in creating the overall very favourable conditions – budget, human resources and communication support, etc - for the team. One of CFIS' main focus has been to rebuild and strengthen the organisational capacity of the secretariat. Overall progress has been very positive when it comes to building routines, management system with focus on results-based management, and improving the ways CFIS supports the Challenges Forum Partnership. In addition, the digitalization initiated in 2018 greatly helped CFIS maintain and evolve the regular work of the partnership in spite of the pandemic, by pushing innovations forward with new platforms like the Whova conference platform. Nevertheless, CFIS continues to suffer from a draining staff rotation (over 200% during 2017-2020), limiting the capacity and effectiveness of CFIS. Against this background, the cumulative results delivered by the Challenges Forum Partnership and CFIS are surprising. CFIS did not explore alternative funding and secondments during 2020 as planned, due to lack of staff resources.

Overview of Outputs

Counting from 2017 and until 2020, there has been a staff rotation of approximately 200 % (12 people) on the four positions. This situation provided opportunities for change, but also resulted in challenges due to lack of institutional memory. With a very competitive process for recruiting highly skilled staff, CFIS has now increased its operational organisational capacity even more. Especially with competencies in communication, a new results-based management approach and system, space for strategic reflections and a joint work on peace operations substance and the theory of change, and increased communication efforts within CFIS and with Partners.

It was key to consolidate CFIS through further team and capacity building initiatives and to make efforts to dramatically decrease staff rotation. Important to raise, are the increased efforts in 2020 to improve the digital project management system Teamwork, fully integrating a results-based approach and outcome indicators into CFIS daily work. This has further increased the effectiveness and decreased transaction costs. The strengthening of CFIS had not been possible without the solid support by the host, FBA, and the responsible Department for Peace Operations, Leadership and Gender. FBA has maintained its financial contribution to CFIS and provided administrative and human resources support to allow for the process of revitalising CFIS. For 2021, FBA is strengthening CFIS with one additional senior expert position.

Outcome Result:

CFIS institutionalised and functioning effectively, efficiently and with sustainability

Despite being a very small secretariat and with limitations due to the Covid pandemic, we have been able to deliver beyond expectations to both partners and external observers. There is room for improvement, but CFIS is keeping a good level regarding effectiveness and efficiency, applying a strategic outlook at its operational management and always aiming at viable and relevant results.

Furthermore, CFIS has systematically gender integrated its activities and outputs, and has been successful in maintaining a staff gender balance. Having a diverse team, has also meant developing a more multifaceted and rich approach towards results. Nevertheless, CFIS is very dependent on few staff members and with continued staff rotation, sustainability is at risk. Especially due to the diplomatic and networking character of CFIS work – it takes time to build trust and knowledge about the partners we support. Slightly increasing the size of CFIS, primarily its administrative capacity, and creating incentives for staff to stay on are essential remedies.

By contracting young and skilled consultants on a temporary basis into the team in 2020, CFIS managed to deliver more than expected. Still, this is a short-term remedy.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Handling the staff turnover in 2020, a continued lesson learned is the importance of teambuilding. These efforts continued throughout 2020 – twice in physical meetings and many times through virtual activities. Additional efforts were made to maintain a shared theory of change, and streamline results-based planning, implementation and follow-up. The management platform “Teamwork” and Challenges Forum strategic objectives have been fully aligned in 2020. Furthermore, with the risk of continued staff rotation, a more proactive approach to medium-term consultancies was taken and proved to be essential for CFIS capacity to support the partnership. This moderated some of the effects of being a small team with high staff rotation. CFIS will during 2021 look into the possibilities of secondments and for additional funding for at least one more staff position.



The CFIS team working intensely during the preparation of the Virtual Annual Forum 2020.

3. CFIS Financial Report 2020

CFIS was financed by FBA and with funds from the Swedish Foreign Ministry through FBA in 2020. The table below specifies the budget and the budget outcome. There was an 84% execution of the budget. The unspent funds were mainly due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition to the Swedish contributions, it is important to highlight that Challenges Forum

partners provided in-kind contributions and assumed costs during different events and projects.

For 2021, the financial outlook is neutral, but due to Covid and more virtual events, funding will increase for the leadership e-tool.

TABLE 1:
Challenges Forum International Secretariat Budget and Financial Results

1. Income 2020	Budget SEK	Outcome SEK	Outcome EUR
Folke Bernadotte Academy	3 600 000	3 340 781	321 229
Swedish Foreign Ministry	2 900 000	2 134 530	205 243
Sum income and expenses per contributor 2020	6 500 000	5 475 310	526 472
2. Expenses 2020	Budget SEK	Outcome SEK	Outcome EUR
2. CFIS Staff	3 600 000	3 265 782	314 017
2.2 CFIS coordination of Challenges Forum	570 000	281 279	27 046
2.3 Publications and experts	1 510 000	1 509 903	145 183
2.4 Virtual Annual Forum 2020	400 000	90 302	8 683
2.5 Roundtable(s)	380 000	253 045	24 331
2.8 Administrative overhead FBA	40 000	74 999	7 211
Sum of expenses per budget line 2020	6 500 000	5 475 310	526 472

*1 EUR= 10,4 SEK

ABOUT CHALLENGES FORUM

Established in 1996, International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations (Challenges Forum), is a global partnership of about 50 peace operations organizations and departments in 24 countries. Our partner organizations come from major troop- and, police- contributing countries to peace operations, including the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. We continually strive to strengthen the international network of actors contributing to and supporting the development and reform of peaceoperations.

Challenges Forum is governed by the Partner Meeting consisting of all its partners. Daily operations are led by the Challenges Forum International Secretariat (CFIS).

The Challenges Forum provides an impartial and informal platform for dialogue on the enhancement of multilateral peace operations. A thought-provoking, innovative, inclusive and results-oriented network for sharing knowledge and experiences, we convene key actors in deliberation on different dimensions and approaches to peace operations at our events and workshops, and in our publications.

Through recommendations and guidance on effective policy reform of peace operations, we contribute to the strengthening of international capability and capacities so as to plan, conduct and evaluate peace operations. Central to our objective is to bridge the divide between policy and operational levels; and create a shared understanding among UN and regional organizations, Member States, T/PCCs and host countries.

Challenges Forum is a global partnership that uses its convening power to generate innovative ideas and promote results for more effective peace operations.



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Challenges Forum consists of Partners from:

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| Argentina | Nigeria |
| Armenia | Norway |
| Australia | Pakistan |
| Canada | Russia |
| China | South Africa |
| Egypt | Sweden |
| Ethiopia | Switzerland |
| France | Turkey |
| Germany | United Kingdom |
| India | United States of America |
| Indonesia | Uruguay |
| Japan | World Federation of United Nations Associations |
| Jordan | |



Hosted by FBA – the Swedish Agency for Peace, Security and Development – on behalf of the Challenges Forum Partnership.