

Implementing WPS mandated tasks in the context of COVID-19

The continued implementation of WPS mandates is central to peacekeeping missions' COVID-19 mitigation and response efforts. Missions are leveraging their current partnerships with national authorities and women's organizations, leaders and networks as critical peace and security partners in the Secretary-General's Global Ceasefire Call and COVID-19 mitigation and response.

Current efforts include:

Gender expertise in COVID-19 related planning and programming: Across all peacekeeping missions, gender units and gender advisers continue to provide strategic gender analysis to mission leadership. This is reflected in the continued prioritization of WPS mandates and the integration of gender across business continuity plans, COVID-19 re-orienting of mandate implementation, support to national authorities and collaboration with UN Country Teams and AFPs. Missions are also advocating to ensure that women's participation in decision-making, funding streams and efforts to mitigate the gendered impacts of COVID-19 are prioritized.

Advocacy and communications: Strategic communications and gender units in missions increased gender-responsive advocacy and communication to raise awareness of COVID-19, disseminate key messages, enhance trust building and mitigate COVID-19 misinformation. While some work has effectively moved online, many women have little or unreliable access to technology and online platforms. Women's literacy rates are also low in some peacekeeping contexts, such as Mali, CAR and South Sudan. Missions are therefore utilizing a variety of context appropriate platforms. This includes mission radio stations with wide national coverage, such as those in DRC, CAR, South Sudan and Mali. In Abeyei, UNISFA will soon begin distributing solar-powered radios to women, targeting vulnerable women and female-headed households. The radios will give women access to a newly launched, UN supported local radio station, providing them with information and a platform organize and conduct advocacy and awareness raising.

Political processes: All missions continue to prioritize women's participation and engagement in national peace and political processes as they are modified and move online. In Mali and CAR, the missions' focus on ongoing and upcoming elections is paying off. In Mali, more women ran for office, and women now comprised 27.8% of MPs. This nearly reaches the 30% quota set out Mali's Law 052, and is higher than the global average. MINUSCA has identified women's participation as central to keeping the national peace process alive and so is supporting their efforts to stay active through direct participation in monitoring and implementation mechanisms, as well as by monitoring the mechanisms, so the process does not collapse.

Women's participation: All missions are continuing targeted community engagement and outreach to women's networks and organizations. MONUSCO trained local women's networks in mediation to enhance their conflict resolution and CVR efforts as they push for armed groups to respect the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire. MONUSCO also supported women's organizations' advocacy with the National Solidarity Fund for COVID-19, which called for a gender analysis of the pandemic and for funding to be put aside for women. In Cyprus, the Gender Technical Committee established by the two leaders to support the peace process began holding regular official meetings, in line with the Security Council's call for its revitalization. The committee also released a statement on the upsurge of violence against women and girls in the context of the pandemic, and called for the gendered impact of the pandemic to be recognized and addressed.

Protection and GBV: Missions continue to prioritize efforts to foster a protective environment, and partner with women's organizations and women's protection networks in this work. UNMISS and UNISFA have also prioritized gender inclusive PoC responses. Given the spike in violence against women, especially domestic violence, all missions continue their gender-based violence prevention and response activities. UNMIK is partnering with UN Women to ensure a coordinated pandemic response, which will be further refined as the result of an assessment currently underway. UNMIK also donated supplies including linens, as well as computers and printers to help children with their schoolwork, to domestic violence shelters. UNFICYP hosted a virtual meeting to showcase good practices being undertaken by women's organizations from both sides in responding to increased levels of domestic violence.

Gender-Responsive SSR, DDR and CVR: Gender-responsive CVR programming is a critical means of addressing civil unrest and insecurity linked to COVID-19. UNMISS is supporting women's organizations to participate in the national DDR commission's discussions on CVR, which has included the submission of a concept note and TOR proposing a gender advisory board for the commission. UNMISS is also encouraging more women ex-combatants to join its DDR/CVR programs. UNIFIL has worked to ensure that the Steering Committee for Lebanon's National Action Plan (NAP) on WPS, of which it is a member, continues to meet despite the pandemic. As the committee lead on SSR, UNIFIL aims to ensure that its gender-responsive SSR work is ongoing during the pandemic response. Through its DDR work, MINUSCA is helping women find alternative means of income generation. MINUSCA has provided participants in its DDR CVR programs, nearly half of which are women, with sewing kits and materials for the production of face masks to protect against COVID-19 transmission.