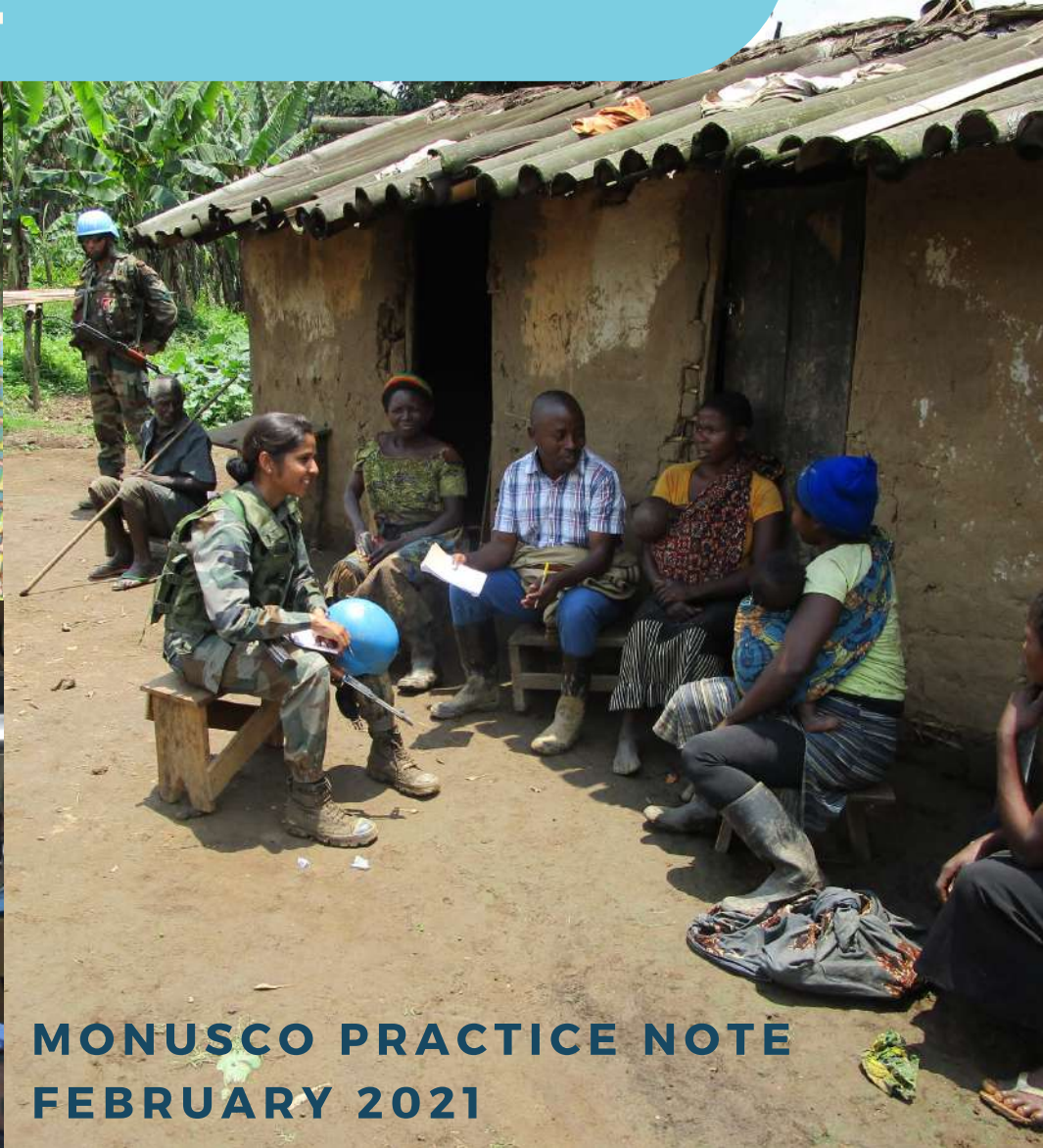




MONUSCO'S ENGAGEMENT TEAMS: PROMOTING THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY MANDATE



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: KEY LESSONS

Best practices

- **Joint Patrols with FARDC:** In Bukavu and Walungu, the Nepalese Engagement Team takes part in joint patrols with the DRC armed forces (FARDC), contributing to a safer environment for local women by increasing their access to patrols and building a rapport between Engagement Team members and local communities, which results in enhanced intelligence and informs patrol routes.
- **Advocacy for improvements in prisons:** In Kalemie, the Indonesian Engagement Team conducted advocacy sessions in the women's section of prisons, promoting community alert mechanisms and women's rights.
- **Enabling women to participate in local dialogue:** In Goma, the Indian Engagement Team initiated, organized and provided security for Local Protection Committee meetings. The meetings enabled women to share concerns, organize themselves more systematically and allowed the Force to incorporate the women's inputs into operational planning.
- **Understanding the needs of internally displaced women and girls:** In Bunia, the Bangladeshi Engagement Team spoke with women in and around IDP camps to understand the high-risk areas for women and plan Battalion patrols accordingly, e.g. to include frequent points of attacks against women, such as firewood collection points outside the camps.

Recommendations

- **Training:** Engagement Teams should be deployed as an integral part of gender-responsive peacekeeping and undergo a standardized, targeted pre-deployment training. The training should include patrolling and search skills, basic Swahili and/or French language skills, conflict-related sexual violence prevention and victim response techniques, among others.¹
- **Structure and coordination:** The prevailing command structure channels Engagement Teams' liaison through the Sector or Brigade commander, resulting in limited direct relations of Engagement Teams with the Force Gender Advisor and civilian staff. A review of the command structure for Engagement Teams could enhance harmonized planning, information sharing and coordination with the Force Gender Advisor and relevant civilian components.
- **Establishing an ET-specific fund in the Force budget:** Outreach activities, training and travel that is required for ETs and the Force Gender Advisor currently don't have a specific fund under the Force budget. Enhancing the visibility of planned and available funding for ETs would support their effective functioning.

¹ A more elaborate list of suggested training modules can be found in the Recommendations section of this document.

INTRODUCTION

“Foremost, it is the impact I have on women and men of the DRC, who now see a broader spectrum of roles in which women fit. Women who are strong, yet gentle, who take charge, who get things done, who protect and safeguard.”

Captain Tanvi Shukla, 1st Indian ET Commander, recognized by the UN Secretariat for her tireless work to integrate a gender perspective into the military function

In 2020, 680 cases of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) were recorded in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO), affecting 674 female and 6 male victims.² But reported cases are only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Of the 5.5 million internally displaced people in the DRC, 51 per cent are women and girls.³ These numbers point towards a bigger picture - that women, men, girls and boys experience conflict differently. Civilians constitute the majority of casualties in conflict, with women and children often being disproportionately affected as a result of pre-existing gender

MONUSCO's Mandate

As strategic priorities under MONUSCO's most recent mandate, UNSCR 2556 (2020), the Mission focuses on the protection of civilians and support to the strengthening and stabilization of State institutions, including through governance and security sector reforms. In order to address root causes of conflict and promote reconciliation, the Mission is explicitly mandated to provide political support and engage with women, and to support a legal, political and socio-economic environment conducive to the full, effective and meaningful participation, involvement and representation of women at all levels. The Mission's Engagement Teams were specifically deployed as a dedicated capacity to facilitate and increase women's participation in the promotion of peace, security and protection of civilians.

inequalities and discrimination. In addition, although women and girls have different perceptions of causes and consequences of armed conflict, their voices often remain unheard in conflict prevention and resolution initiatives paving pathways for peace.

In recognition of these facts, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security, and its subsequent Security Council resolutions, addressed the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women; the undervalued and underutilized contributions women make to conflict

prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding; and highlighted the importance of women's and girls' equal and full participation as active agents for

² This is a documented decrease of 35 per cent as compared to 1,054 victims in 2019. The majority of those affected in 2020 were victims of sexual violence perpetrated by armed group combatants and militia members (70 per cent), while the rest (30 per cent) were subjected to sexual violence by State agents (United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in the DRC (UNJHRO). MONUSCO – OHCHR Analysis of the Human Rights Situation in 2020, published in 2021).

³ OCHA, DRC Displacement - Site Assessment, *Personnes Déplacées Internes et Retournées*, accessed 10 February 2021.

peace. In the most recent Security Council Resolution 2538(2020) on Women, Peace and Security, mixed engagement teams were highlighted as a key component to ensure full, effective and meaningful participation of uniformed women in all components, functions and at all levels.⁴ The political commitment to implementing Women, Peace and Security priorities was further solidified in the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) Initiative, which reaffirmed women's equal participation in peace processes and political solutions as essential for effective peacekeeping.

In order to mainstream the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda into the military component of UN Peacekeeping, the UN Office of Military Affairs (OMA) incorporates gender equality and WPS-related strategies into all planning and doctrine and promotes gender parity initiatives that aim to increase the number of women officers and soldiers in military deployments.



Indian ET conducting an area domination patrol in Kilolirwe, North Kivu, March 2020

In peacekeeping missions, the military component ensures that the military functions and branches, military observers and contingents integrate the gender equality and WPS mandates in operations and tactical activities.⁵

What we mean when we talk about Engagement

Community engagement is a strategic process to directly involve local populations in all aspects of decision-making, policy development and implementation to strengthen local ownership, capacities and community structures as well as to improve transparency, accountability and optimal resource allocations across diverse settings. Community engagement also includes continuous relationship building with key contacts in the community, including local authorities and security providers, and the ongoing evaluation of these contacts to determine if they remain a reliable source of information. MONUSCO's civilian component, and particularly the Civil Affairs Section through its Community Alert Network, Local Protection Committees and Joint Protection Missions (JPT) and Joint Assessment Missions (JAM), ensures that the needs and concerns put forward by communities and civil society actors form a cornerstone of the Mission's efforts on peace and security.

Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs) are another critical asset for peacekeeping missions as they provide insights into local cultures, community perceptions, political

⁴ See [United Nations Security Council Resolution 2538\(2020\)](#), paragraph 12.

⁵ See [2018.01 UN Policy on Gender-Responsive United Nations Peacekeeping Operations](#), E.7b

Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs)

CLAs are local civilian personnel from the Civil Affairs Section, familiar with the local conflict dynamics and embedded with the Mission's military contingents in forward operating locations. They represent a unique entry point to local communities and key actors especially for uniformed components, whom they support with knowledge of local languages and nuanced understanding of local cultural and social-political dynamics necessary to the Force's mission to engage with communities in a context-sensitive manner. CLAs support the MONUSCO Force in fulfilling the PoC mandate through active liaison with the community, information gathering, identifying risks to civilians, performing protection analysis, and developing locally tailored and demand-driven protection plans in cooperation with COB/TOB Commanders.

dynamics and threats to civilians at the local level. Their deployment provides the Mission's civil and military components with first-hand information from remote areas to better understand local communities and dynamics at field level and assist in responding to evolving protection and security situations. CLAs play a pivotal role in developing and sustaining community relations with the MONUSCO Force and other Mission's components or sections, in building confidence among the population, and monitoring security alerts.

As a key initiative to further promote gender-responsive military operations, the Office of Military Affairs introduced an Engagement Team (ET) capability in January 2020, incorporating trained ETs composed of at least 50 per cent female members into the infantry battalion structure. Engagement is a core military responsibility and focuses on interaction with representatives of the local population, government and non-governmental actors to improve their understanding of UN peacekeeping; their buy-in and cooperation in protection of civilians and other peacekeeping initiatives; and to allow for enhanced service delivery and reporting by integrating the voices, needs and concerns of women, men, girls and boys in local communities.⁶ In MONUSCO, the deployment of ETs prior to the issuance of official guidance provided the starting point for this review of existing best practices, challenges and recommendations, to assist MONUSCO and other UN peacekeeping missions in further structuring and streamlining the ET scope of work and capability.



South African ET conducting a patrol in the Beni area, North Kivu, March 2018

⁶ For an extended overview of tasks of ETs, see [UNIBAM](#), paragraph 2.4.2.5. Engagement/ CIMIC, p.17

WHY WOMEN IN UNIFORM MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Uniformed women support the systematic integration of a gender perspective into all aspects of peacekeeping analysis, planning and execution of operations and thus have a direct impact on the four pillars of UN Security Council Resolution 1325: participation, protection, prevention, and gender-responsive relief and recovery.⁷

- **Participation:** Uniformed women facilitate access to and engagement with local communities, including through meetings with women's organizations and civil society. They participate in assessment and intelligence initiatives and consider the integration of local women's needs and concerns into military strategies, policies, planning and operations.
- **Protection:** Uniformed women take part in patrols and military planning, e.g. by contributing to military units' analyses which consider impacts on women, men, girls and boys; identifying high-risk areas, and contributing to operations that prevent and protect local communities from conflict-related sexual violence and human rights abuses.
- **Prevention:** Uniformed women further support the analysis, planning and execution of operations, to ensure these counter gender-based discrimination, including by collecting information through engagement with local women's networks. At the Company level, uniformed women deter attacks against local communities, and respond robustly to prevent and stop human rights violations, including sexual violence.
- **Gender-responsive relief and recovery:** The presence of female uniformed personnel can facilitate a safer environment for the participation of local women in reconstruction, community dialogues and reconciliation initiatives.



SRS Award recipient Major Rehman of Pakistan in a planning session with FC Lt Gen Costa Neves, Goma, North Kivu, January 2020

⁷ See DPO [Gender Equality and Women, Peace and Security. Resource Package](#) (January 2020), p.13. In addition, key indicators on the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in military components can be found in Annex B of this document.

ENGAGEMENT TEAMS

Organization of Engagement Teams

According to the UNIBAM, the integration of an Engagement Platoon (EP) is mandatory for each Infantry Battalion.⁸ The EP operates through ETs, containing four personnel per team.⁹ The number of ETs accompanying a patrol depends on the task and situation on the ground, with two women recommended per patrol. While ETs can be made up of men and women from any military branch and any rank, teams must have the appropriate rank structure to establish a command and control hierarchy. ETs are under the tactical control of the receiving company for the period of their deployment.

“Engagement can improve force protection through better situational awareness and ensure that violations of UN policy or international law are recognized and reported. Engagement with the host government, parties to the conflict and other armed groups may help improve the relationship between the Force and the local community.”

2020.01 UN Infantry Battalion Manual, 2.4.2.5. Engagement/ CIMIC, p.17

Tasks of Engagement Teams

Concrete tasks ETs can perform¹⁰ in support of their battalion include:

- **Patrolling:** The Infantry Battalion Commander should include the deployment of the ET in the patrol plan to facilitate outreach to local populations. ET patrols can be deployed to interact with perpetrators and potential perpetrators of human rights abuses / human rights violations and to encourage conflict resolution and dialogue. ET patrols can also be deployed to meet vulnerable communities and engage with key leaders.
- **Convoy escorts for internally displaced people and refugees:** ETs should be incorporated into the convoy when internally displaced people or refugees are being escorted.
- **Support to Cordon and Search operations:** The primary purpose of a Cordon & Search (C&S) operation is to isolate and search an area for armed individuals/groups or material of evidentiary and/or peacekeeping-intelligence value. ETs can support information collection and inform the local population about the reason for C&S operations while they are in progress.

⁸ See [UNIBAM](#), paragraph 3.6.2. In specialist Infantry Battalions, such as QRFs or Special Forces units, ETs are optional, as these are designed for offensive actions rather than engagement.

⁹ See [UNIBAM](#), paragraph 3.6.2. Battalions with three companies will have four ETs, while battalions with four companies will have five ETs.

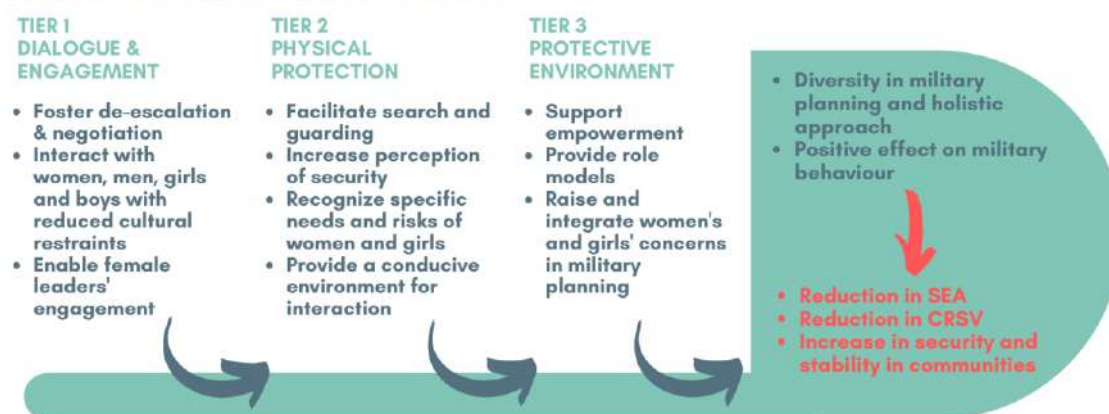
¹⁰ Tasks include but are not limited to the those listed in paragraph 2.3.3.5 in the [UNIBAM](#).

- **Support to disarmament processes:** ETs can provide reassurance and support for female dependents and combatants of armed groups taking part in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) processes. Uniformed women can also assist in identifying and profiling dependants, combatants and women associated with armed groups in close cooperation with Missions' Child Protection Sections, Women Protection Advisors and UN agencies.
- **Conduct of gender-inclusive village assessments:** ETs should be trained and deployed to collect population data and information on human rights abuses as well as to identify high-risk areas.¹¹

Engagement Teams, Protection of Civilians and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

The protection of civilians (POC) and the WPS Agenda are mutually reinforcing, with POC necessitating a gender perspective which reflects the intersectionality between gender and protection and which considers gender-based differences in status and power and how they shape both the immediate protection needs and long-term interests of women, men, girls and boys. As a tier of the 2019 DPO *Policy on Protection of Civilians in UN Peacekeeping*, engagement and dialogue with communities and other stakeholders have been identified as crucial mechanisms to reduce the need for reliance on physical protection by missions.¹² As outlined above, ETs are uniquely placed to drive engagement, identify the specific risks faced by those disproportionately affected by conflict and subsequently develop practical ways to reduce these risks.¹³ The table below identifies protection tiers in which female peacekeepers can positively affect local dialogue and peace processes and increase physical security for women and girls in their area of operations.

PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS: TIERS OF PROTECTION



¹¹ A template for a gender-inclusive village assessment can be found on p.110f of the [UNIBAM](#).

¹² See [Policy on Protection of Civilians in UN Peacekeeping](#), D.3.b, Tier I, p.11

¹³ While uniformed women in ETs should not be the sole unit to conduct gender analyses, they can often interact with vulnerable groups more easily.

ENGAGEMENT TEAMS IN MONUSCO

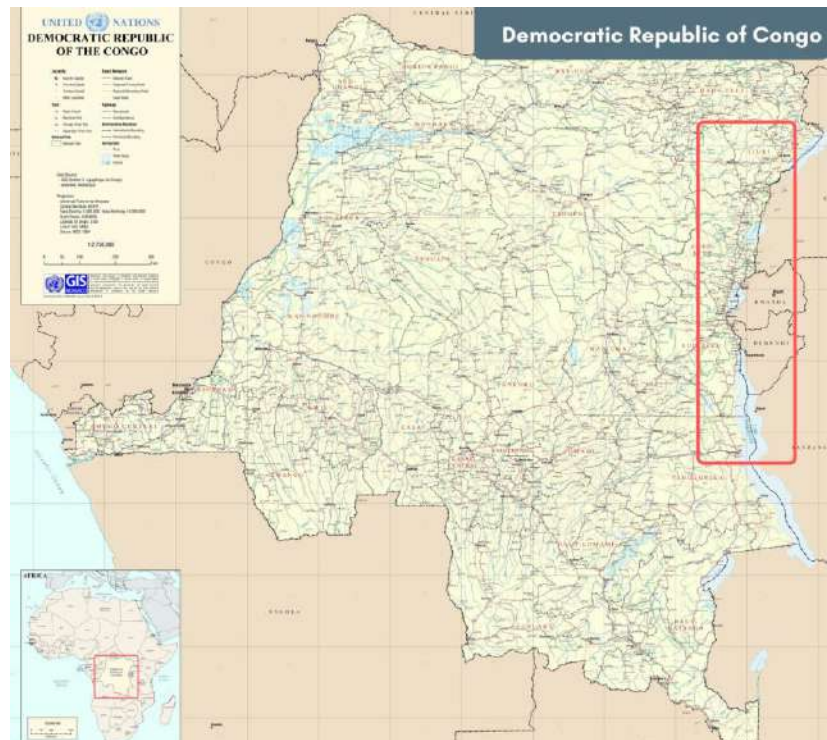
From 2017 to 2020, MONUSCO Troop Contributing Countries have increased the number of female peacekeepers from 1 to 5.25 per cent. The Mission's ETs were specifically deployed as a dedicated capacity to promote the Women, Peace and Security Agenda; facilitate and increase women's participation in the promotion of peace, security and protection of civilians (including by engaging women's networks as partners in protection), and supporting disarmament, demobilization and reintegration as well as security sector reform (SSR) efforts, in line with the Mission Mandate as set out in UNSCR 2502 (2019).¹⁴ Recognizing that the number of uniformed women deployed by its Troop Contributing Countries is still limited, MONUSCO deploys both Engagement Teams which are mixed-gender teams with a minimum of 50 per cent women personnel. MONUSCO's ETs provide a unique channel to communicate with Congolese women and identify high-risk areas for conflict-related sexual violence, such as water collection points, agricultural areas, markets and forests; especially after nightfall and where MONUSCO substantive sections may not be able to reach unless accompanied by force protection. Such contextualized information about conflict-related sexual violence risks can reinforce the work of the Mission's Women Protection Advisors, e.g. the mapping of service actors for delivery of medical/psychosocial aid.

"In my role, I see myself as a catalyst which has brought so many minute, but crucial changes. By venturing into yet unexplored areas of work, we are presenting gender not as a question, but as an answer."

Captain Tanvi Shukla, 1st Indian ET Commander

Current Engagement Teams' Deployments and Scope of Work

In 2019, the number of ETs deployed in MONUSCO tripled from 5 to 15, with nine out of the 26 Troop Contributing Countries deploying a dedicated team to conduct engagement activities. A total of 15 ETs are deployed across Eastern DRC in February 2021, which primarily focus on



¹⁴ See [UNSCR 2502 \(2019\)](#), Section ii.f on Security Sector Reform and Section ii.g – k on DDR.

civil-military coordination-related activities, such as sensitization on human rights issues and health concerns.



In these areas of operations, uniformed women are increasingly conducting joint patrols with national security forces as well as night patrols and Area Domination Patrols. MONUSCO ETs have also been integrated in Standing Combat Deployments (SCD), e.g. in Pinga, North Kivu Province, where high rates of attacks against civilians and conflict-related sexual violence are recorded, to increase the accessibility of SCDs for local women and to bolster protection of civilians.

Structure and Coordination of MONUSCO Engagement Teams

Currently, all ETs in MONUSCO deploy as mixed-gender teams. While several ETs have their operations planned solely by uniformed women, the lack of female personnel trained as infantry forces ETs to draw on male colleagues in the area of operations to provide force protection at activity and incident sites. Currently, MONUSCO ETs receive their tasking from unit commanders based on operational requirements.

Bangladeshi ET conducts a patrol in Irumu Territory, Ituri Province, July 2020



BEST PRACTICES

A number of best practices have been identified in MONUSCO which highlight the value ETs contribute to the Mission's operations and implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

Participation

- **Enabling women to participate in local dialogue:**

In Goma, the Indian ET developed a database of female community leaders, public figures and women's groups based on conversations with women in the community. The information received from these women was utilized to focus patrolling in high-risk areas and to plan civil-military coordination activities based on communities' needs. The ET also provided physical protection for "Urafiki" meetings¹⁵ and Local Protection Committee meetings, which enabled the attending women to share their concerns and perceived risks to local peace and stability. This information then fed into operational planning of the Force, e.g. resulting in arrests of perpetrators of human rights abuses and human rights violations and/or subsequent patrols. Engagement with these local women's networks also proved to be an effective tool for trust building between the Mission and local communities, awareness raising on Mission initiatives and for preventing community disputes.



Bangladeshi ET conducts a foot patrol in Bankoko Quarter in Bunia, Ituri, March 2020

The ET also provided physical protection for "Urafiki" meetings¹⁵ and Local Protection Committee meetings, which enabled the attending women to share their concerns and perceived risks to local peace and stability. This information then fed into operational planning of the Force, e.g. resulting in arrests of perpetrators of human rights abuses and human rights violations and/or subsequent patrols. Engagement with these local women's networks also proved to be an effective tool for trust building between the Mission and local communities, awareness raising on Mission initiatives and for preventing community disputes.

Protection

- **Understanding the needs of internally displaced women and girls:** In Bunia, the Bangladeshi ET spoke with women within and around camps for internally displaced people (IDP) to learn about high-risk areas for women living in these settings. The ET

¹⁵ "Urafiki" denotes 'friendship' in Swahili.

gathered inputs of hundreds of women in Loda and Roe IDP camps in Djugu territory which informed the Battalion of where to increase patrols to prevent conflict-related sexual violence and resulted in the launch of routine standing patrols around the areas of insecurity where women work, to provide protection and support early warning mechanisms.

- **Providing support to victims of conflict-related sexual violence:**

Several of the ETs have deployed two to three female peacekeepers to Standing Combat Deployments (SCD) to ensure a permanent presence of uniformed women in locations where conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) was identified as a major risk for communities. This aims to identify area-specific threats and risks with the support of local women and girls and to provide a preventative military



Engagement patrol by the South African Contingent in Beni, North Kivu, March 2018

presence. SCD members receive training on how to deal with CRSV cases, including on case referrals, protection, non-discrimination, confidentiality and victims' consent. When CRSV cases are reported to female SCD members, they can offer Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) Kits, signpost victims to health services and pass on basic information to the field office Women's Protection Advisor and/or UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) staff for follow-up investigations.

Prevention

- **Joint patrols with national armed forces:** In Bukavu and Walungu, female members of the Nepalese ET take part in joint patrols with the national armed forces (FARDC), also based on information received from the Women Protection Advisor and UNJHRO on conflict-related sexual violence hotspots or where conflict-related sexual violence allegations have emerged. Through the presence of uniformed women in the ET, local women built a rapport with the ET and exceedingly reached out to provide information on security concerns, which results in enhanced intelligence, changes in patrol routes and more effective protection.

- **COVID-19 awareness raising:**

Throughout Ituri Province, the Bangladeshi ET organized 18 awareness sessions on COVID-19, including in five camps for internally displaced people and at women's community centres, with women and children as the primary target audience. Approximately 200 community members were briefed on COVID-19 symptoms, modes of transmission, and preventive measures, with the ET also disseminating leaflets in Alur and Swahili and establishing hand washing points.



Bangladeshi ET establishes a handwashing point at Shari Community Women's Centre (above) and hosts an awareness session on COVID-19 for women in Bunia (below), Ituri, May 2020



- **Advocacy for improvements in prisons:**

In Kalemie, the Indonesian ET worked closely with MONUSCO's substantive components including the Civil Affairs Section, Gender Affairs Section and the Corrections Unit to conduct advocacy sessions for women in the town's prison, promoting the availability of community alert mechanisms and women's rights.

- **Targeted health campaigns to local populations:** In Uvira and Sange, the Pakistani ET organized a mental health campaign, led by a qualified health professional in the ET. The campaign comprised a series of information sessions in local schools and on the MONUSCO base, and specifically focused on female survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

Gender-responsive relief and recovery

- **Mainstreaming gender concerns:** In Tshikapa and Kananga, the Moroccan ET participated in civil-military coordination (CIMIC) planning and ensured the mainstreaming of gender concerns into project management, with at least 50 per cent of CIMIC projects directly benefitting women, such as the Kamako water

project, which facilitated easy access to clean water for local communities and particularly women and girls, who are predominantly tasked with securing water supplies for households.

Guiding Principles

In the course of this initial phase of rolling out ETs in MONUSCO, the Mission has identified guiding principles to ensure effective engagement:

- **Engagements in uniformed clothing:** Members of ETs should conduct all activities in uniform to increase the visibility of female peacekeepers, allow them to act as role models, be accountable, and raise awareness and visibility for MONUSCO activities in support of local populations.



- **Mandate-aligned scope of engagement:** All activities of the ETs should be in accordance with the MONUSCO Mandate and UN core values. Culturally sensitive topics (e.g. sexual and reproductive health, sex education) and topics in which ETs members are not professionally trained should be avoided. Health care-related sessions should be aligned with the capacities of the national medical infrastructure.
- **Child protection activities:** All activities including interaction with children should be planned with the guidance of MONUSCO's Child Protection Section and the Civil Affairs Section. Only public educational institutions should be selected as sites for activities.
- **'Do no harm' principle:** In dealing with cases of abuse, the victims' needs, dignity and wishes must be fully respected, e.g. in reporting to authorities. Awareness raising on conflict-related sexual violence should primarily focus on preventing attacks against women instead of promoting behavioural change or adaptation

by women. In line with existing UN guidance,¹⁶ taking photographs of or with victims of abuse or children which allow the identification of individuals place the latter at risk and must be avoided.



Peacekeeper of the Malawian Battalion in Beni, North Kivu, December 2018

- **UN Gender-sensitive approaches:** ETs should, in the planning of activities, draw on the expertise of the Force HQ and Sector Gender Focal Points (GFPs) - with the guidance of the Force Gender Advisor as well as the Mission's Gender Affairs Unit - to ensure consistency in promulgation of UN core values and gender-responsive messaging.
- **Programmatic activities:** ETs should not distribute gifts or sweets to local populations as standard practice, as this does not contribute to long-term improvements and undermines the programmatic value that uniformed women can

contribute to mandate implementation.

- **Including ET objectives and outputs in the Mission Results-Based Budgeting (RBB):** Drawing from the CPAS implementation, the Mission reviewed ETs' portfolio and priority objectives and summarized the deployment and intent of ETs in a single output that was included in MONUSCO's 21/22 RBB proposal. Further, the Mission included the deployment of ETs in the RBB planning assumptions, in the framework of strengthening the Mission's efforts on community engagement for POC. By including ETs as an output, budget requirements for ETs are more visible, linking any outreach or programmatic funding requirement to a specific expected result.

Structural Challenges

- **Reporting lines and command structure:** The prevailing command structure does not allow ETs to directly liaise with the Force Gender Advisor and Child Protection

¹⁶ See for instance [Manual for Child Protection Staff in United Nations Peace Operations](#), p.124
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Officer or field office staff, which hampers coordinated planning and may prevent activities from achieving the desired operational outcome and impact.

- **Gender Focal Point function:** Sector-level Gender and Child Protection Focal Points currently perform their function part-time, which results in limited support available for ETs.
- **Limited awareness:** Limited awareness persists regarding the role of ETs and the benefit of deploying uniformed women among the majority of uniformed personnel, which makes it difficult for the ET Team Leader to gain support for ET plans and activities.
- **Disconnect with wider units:** ETs deploy out of sync with their units, i.e. not for the same tour of duty, which hinders the establishment of strong working relationships. Uniformed women should be routinely deployed for the same length of time as their male counterparts and consequently as their wider units, with shorter tours approved on a case-by-case basis for women with childcare responsibilities in their country of origin.

- **Lack of enablers:** A persistent lack of female Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs) and female Language Assistants (LAs) conversant in French and local languages such as Swahili hampers effective communication with

Pakistani ET partakes in an RDB patrol in Nayakabere, South Kivu, March 2020



women in local communities.¹⁷ Gaps in training on CRSV for all Mission personnel involved in community engagements further pose risks to a *Do no harm* approach and successful engagement.

¹⁷ CLAS are trained national Civil Affairs Officers who perform CAS structured work, including direct engagement with community members. LAs are exclusively in charge of translation and should be trained on CRSV terminology and the Mission's role in response to CRSV for their understanding of the context.

- **Personal security of uniformed women:** Personal security is a key aspect enabling uniformed women to effectively implement their mandate. In designing and maintaining camps of the MONUSCO Force, priority must be given to the proximity of women's sanitary facilities to personal accommodation, female-only recreational areas, sufficient lighting throughout the camp, lockable sanitary facilities and accommodation, and communication systems that directly contribute to personal security.
- **Reporting, monitoring and evaluation:** At present, there is no standardized mechanism for ETs in peacekeeping missions to report on activities and their impact, which makes it difficult to establish the effectiveness of ET activities and adjust ET operations based on collected data beyond the direct, ad hoc feedback received from community members during activities.

Perceptions of MONUSCO Engagement Teams

In the community

Over time, Engagement Teams in MONUSCO were able to build a rapport with local women and succeeded in having women openly share their security concerns.

We are happy to have the Tanzanian Peacekeepers in our midst today. We thank God for the assistance MONUSCO continues to offer us in these difficult times of conflict.

A young mother, participating in a medical counselling and check-up session by the Tanzanian ET in Matembo village, North Kivu. Photo Du Jour, 11 March 2020.

"Bangladeshi female soldiers are the hope and the inspiration for us. We feel safer and we are aware of gender-based violence".

A female Bambe village resident, in response to patrols by female Bangladeshi peacekeepers in Ituri Province. Photo Du Jour, 28 March 2020

Among uniformed personnel

Engagement Teams are still often regarded with skepticism among MONUSCO uniformed personnel, as their role and contribution to overall mandate implementation is not widely understood. While ETs may receive rhetorical support, the logistic support required to implement ET activities is often perceived as an added burden to Troop Contributing Countries' units. Unit commanders are mostly accommodating and positive towards ETs, potentially also due to the messaging of higher commands, but a subtle sense of doubt seems to remain regarding the relevance and operational impact of ETs.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Recommendations

The deployment of ETs is still in its early stages for UN peacekeeping overall and for MONUSCO in particular. Unit commanders can take a leading role in countering stereotypes and facilitating changes in mindsets to enable and promote the effective integration of uniformed women and utilization of ETs to achieve mandated objectives. Where the capacities and contributions of uniformed women are embraced, ETs can act as force multipliers and aid units in successfully delivering on the Mission's Mandate.



South African female peacekeepers of the MONUSCO COB Mavivi engage in training, March 2018

The recommendations below provide the Office of Military Affairs, Troop Contributing Countries, the Force leadership and unit commanders with some concrete steps to further harness the potential of ETs in mandate implementation.

To UN Headquarters/ Office of Military Affairs

- **Streamlining Engagement Teams' responsibilities:** Terms of References should be developed by the Office of Military Affairs to standardise the role of Engagement Platoons (EP). While the UNIBAM identifies eight core functions for Infantry Battalions that complement the national doctrine,¹⁸ Missions should develop country-specific Terms of References that reflect needs and realities in the specific area of operations and directly effectuate the Mission's Mandate.
- **Pre-deployment training:** The Office of Military Affairs should develop a basic, targeted pre-deployment training requirement for all EP members, with the below specific modules as mandatory elements:

¹⁸ Infantry Battalion core functions entail: Command and Control; Military Peacekeeping Intelligence; Mobility and Manoeuvre; Sustainment; Engagement; Firepower; Protection and Security (including Protection of Civilians and Force Protection); and Interoperability (2020.01 [UNIBAM](#), p.14)

- Physical fitness;
- Patrolling skills and searching techniques;
- Basic language and communication skills in Swahili and/or French, including working with interpreters, questioning techniques and report writing;
- Introduction to conflict-related sexual violence prevention, response and guidelines on referral of victims;
- Introduction to the integration of gender perspectives into peacekeeping operations; the Women, Peace and Security Agenda; child protection; human rights and protection of civilians;
- Basic introduction to local cultures and norms in the area of operations.

Where these requirements cannot be met by the Troop Contributing Country prior to deployment, commanders should facilitate training for the ET within four weeks of arrival in the DRC. The Force Gender Advisor and MONUSCO substantive sections in the above areas can support the planning and implementation of these trainings.

- **Streamlined guidance on reporting, monitoring and evaluation:** The Office of Military Affairs should develop overall guidelines on reporting and data to be



South African Engagement Team conducts patrol from Mavivi to Muzambayi in Beni, North Kivu, March 2018

collected by ETs, to allow for cross-mission standardized monitoring and evaluation of the performance, impact and effectiveness of ETs. Efforts to streamline the reporting by ETs should be integrated with ongoing performance assessment efforts such as the Comprehensive Performance Assessment System (CPAS), existing reporting software (e.g. SAGE) and reporting templates.¹⁹

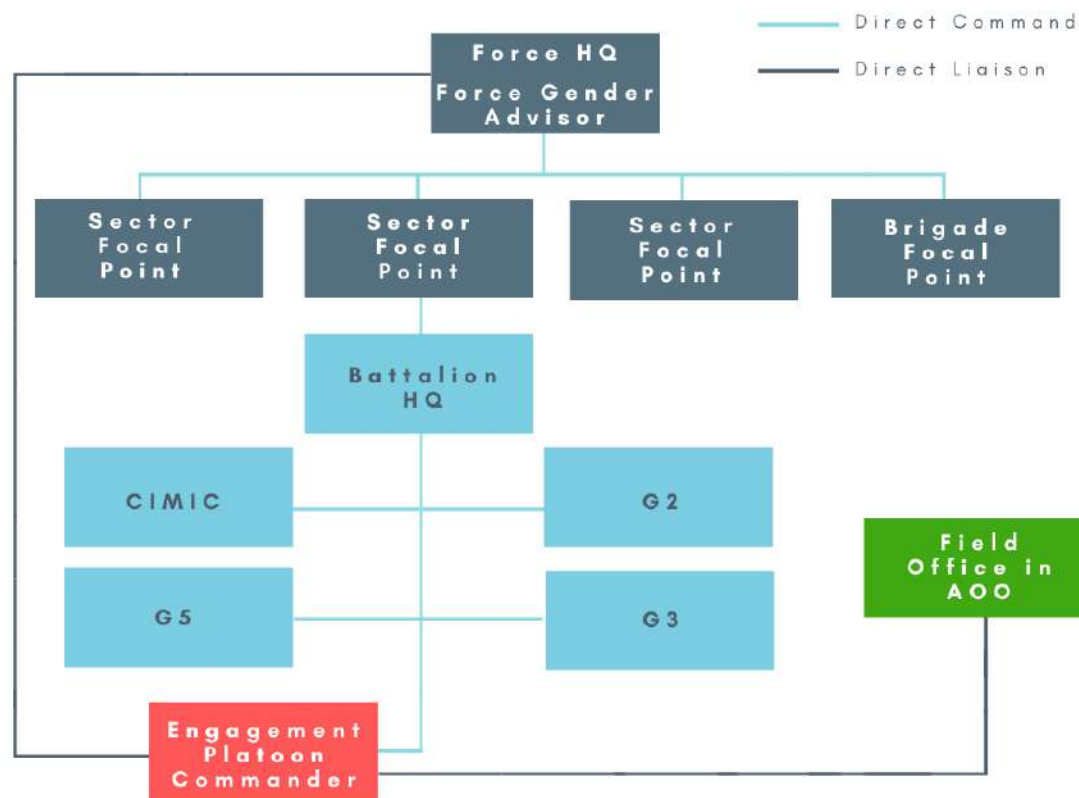
¹⁹ The reporting template in Annex A developed by the MONUSCO Force can serve as a starting point, in conjunction with the [UNIBAM](#) template for a gender-inclusive village assessment. A Mission-specific ET dashboard based on SAGE data and information collected by ETs was previously discussed in MONUSCO, but remains at the proposal stage.

To Troop Contributing Countries

- **Engagement Platoons:** All Troop Contributing Countries are in line with the UNIBAM required to deploy with Engagement Platoons.
- **Pre-deployment training:** Troop Contributing Countries should ensure that uniformed women receive the same scope and quality of pre-deployment training as their male counterparts, to provide them with the required skillsets for conducting military activities.

- **Firmly embedding Engagement Teams within the Force and Mission structure:**

Troop Contributing Countries should firmly embed ETs in the Force and Mission coordination structure. ETs should be under the direct command of the Sector Focal Point and Battalion HQ. EP commanders should maintain close liaison with the Force HQ, Force Gender Advisor and the field office in their area of operations. The details of operation for each ET, while informed by the Military Gender Action Plan, should remain flexible and under the command of the respective Troop Contributing Country.



- **Syncing Engagement Teams' deployments with their respective Force units:** ETs should be embedded in the units they deploy with. Prior to their deployment, they should also gain an understanding of Mission Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) and of how each Force component as well as civilian sections contribute to the Mission's operations. Rotations of EPs must be synced with the deploying unit of their Troop Contributing Country to foster strong working relationships and avoid

disconnect, while shorter deployments of individual EP members can be considered on a case-by-case basis.

- **Composition of Engagement Teams:** All Infantry Battalions are to ensure mixed patrolling, by incorporating trained EPs (with at least 50 per cent of EP members being women) into routine military activity and into their overall force structure. ETs can continue to be either composed of mixed-gender or female-only components, also based on the availability of trained female uniformed personnel in the Troop Contributing Country. The reigning premise should be to allow for maximum achievement of protection, participation, prevention and gender integration targets.

At the Mission level

- **Championing the role of Engagement Platoons in advancing Mandate implementation:** The Force leadership must understand the role and value of ETs, seek their utilization in advancing Mandate implementation, and actively champion their contribution to the Mission.



Indonesian ET conducts observation activities in Kalemie, Tanganyika, March 2020

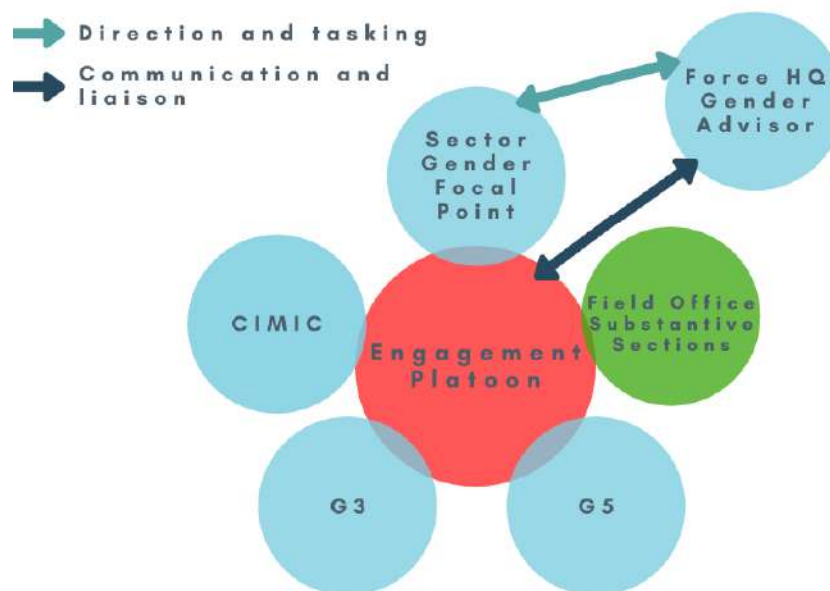
- **Zero tolerance for sexual harassment:** Zero tolerance for sexual harassment should be universally and rigorously enforced by Sector and Brigade Commanders, and members of the Force should be held accountable for non-compliance, as per the Memorandum of Understanding between the United Nations and their Troop Contributing Country. Engagement Teams should be fully aware of the United Nations “zero tolerance” policy on sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), including the Mission’s established reporting mechanisms for

misconduct. This will allow the Teams to positively contribute to and support the Mission’s strategy in addressing SEA concerns involving personnel, such as participation in robust outreach and sensitization activities and reporting efforts, interactions with communities, especially the established community-based complaint networks, as well as with their Troop Contributing Country colleagues.

- **Increasing enablers:** In order to facilitate effective communication with women in local communities, the number of female Community Liaison Assistants should be increased, including through revisiting regulations of and expanding existing rosters. Increasing the number of female Language Assistants would further allow for an all-female team of Mission personnel and “safe space” to engage with potential victims of CRSV. Training on conflict-related sexual violence should be provided to Community Liaison Assistants and all other Mission personnel prior to their engagement with communities.

- **Streamlining coordination and reporting lines of ETs:**

MONUSCO ETs receive their tasking from unit commanders based on operational requirements which are coordinated through the G5. The Teams should further coordinate with the Civil-Military Coordination Section and substantive civilian sections of the field office in their area of operations to align and prioritize their work, deconflict operations and promote gender integration in military strategies and plans.²⁰ ETs also need to coordinate with the Chief G3 regarding reporting requirements and with the Sector Gender Focal Point (GFP) to receive area-specific gender-related data and information. A strong link should also be maintained between the Sector GFP and Force Gender Advisor to ensure that ETs receive comprehensive and up-to-date information on Force priorities, planning and upcoming operations. There should further be not more than two ETs per location to avoid duplication of effort.



- **Launching a reporting, monitoring and evaluation pilot:** Based on guidelines on reporting and data collection to be developed by the Office of Military Affairs, a pilot coordinated by the Force Gender Advisor in conjunction with the Troop Contributing Country commander could be rolled out with one ET at the Mission level. The pilot should include regular meetings with substantive civilian sections at

²⁰ Each RDB/BATT has a military CIMIC branch. While ETs are not directly part of CIMIC, they should be in routine contact with the CIMIC Section.

the field level (see point 2 in *Future Engagement Team Priorities* below), to identify protection of civilians hotspots and establish one or two locations for the ET to conduct regular engagement activities over an initial period of three months, aimed to increase the security for women, men, boys and girls. The EP should report monthly on its activities and interactions, community members reached, impacts of activities as well as trends in human rights abuses and human rights violations in the area of operations to the Force Gender Advisor.²¹ Caveats in measuring effectiveness should be considered in all reporting efforts, e.g. concerning the pursued objective of long-term improvements in the security of communities; decrease in conflict; and human rights abuses and human rights violations versus short-term trends which may be determined by a number of external variables outside the influence and capabilities of ETs.

■ **Strengthening the role of Sector Gender Focal Points:**

Due to the current part-time position of Sector Gender Focal Points (GFP), their gender-related tasks are often subordinate to other functional requirements, making the position a figurehead in many instances. Sector GFP should be transformed into full-time positions, with incumbents selected

based on relevant skillsets and provided with additional training and guidance by the Force Gender Advisor. In lieu of converting the Sector GFP into a full-time function, it is recommended that a direct reporting line be maintained to the Force HQ GFP.



²¹ The reporting could include qualitative and quantitative indicators such as the number of community members reached (disaggregated by gender and age), accounts of violence (incl. CRSV) reported to the team, quality of participation and confidence in the ET, details of atmospherics such as details of the discussions raised by the community, levels of violence reported, key security challenges and areas, etc.

Suggestions for future Engagement Platoon Priorities

ETs and uniformed women deployed with a Troop Contributing Country to MONUSCO perform various roles. The below suggestions for priorities will further carve out the Teams' responsibilities and streamline their integration into activities advancing the Mission Mandate.

- **Coordination with Force Protection Working Group:** ET Leaders should routinely participate in the Protection Working Group at Sector and Brigade HQ level, to contribute to risk analyses on the protection of civilians and the development of protection strategies.
- **Coordination with MONUSCO Protection stakeholders:** ETs should establish relations and regularly liaise with field offices and, more specifically, staff in the UNJHRO, Gender Affairs, Protection of Civilians, Child Protection sections and Women Protection Advisors. Integration of ET commanders in existing field office-level coordination and information sharing structures between the above substantive sections (such as the Senior Management Group on Protection – Provincial (SMGPP)) provides a key source of information to discuss and allocate priority engagement tasks, and to develop civil-military coordination projects that benefit women and girls.



Female peacekeepers partake in security assessment operation in Lukweti, North Kivu, April 2020

- **Increased participation of uniformed women in patrols:**

Engagement Teams members and uniformed women in general should be deployed on patrols, Joint Assessment Missions (JAMs) and to Standing Combat Deployments and Company Operating Bases (COBs), especially in areas that have been identified as high-risk for human rights violations,

human rights abuses and conflict-related sexual violence. Their deployment can facilitate in risk mitigation through early warning mechanisms as well as prevention through the exercise of physical protection.

- **Coordination with MONUSCO civilian sections:** ETs should liaise with the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Section, Heads of field offices, Women Protection

Advisors and the Child Protection Section to plan and implement outreach activities at the field office level which target women and girls associated with armed groups, to advocate for the demobilization process of women and for the release of children from armed groups. Female peacekeepers can in these outreach activities provide an alternative, relatable role model and encourage more women to partake in disarmament processes and to access related services. ETs can further assist with the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration, and resettlement (DD3R) process for women combatants and combatants' dependents by screening and collecting gender-sensitive information.

- **Provision of gender-based analysis and planning:** EPs should, in collaboration with the MONUSCO Civil Affairs Section and Gender Affairs Unit, develop a hotspot mapping for their respective area of operations, detailing the gender-based risks for civilians. They further should contribute to operational planning of protection against armed groups, to the planning of kinetic operations (e.g. operations of the Force Intervention Brigade) and strategies through a Women, Peace, and Security lens.
- **Facilitation of local women's participation in dialogue:** Each ET shall, in cooperation with the MONUSCO Gender Affairs Unit, Gender Focal Points and Civil Affairs staff at the field office level, establish a database of key women's organisations and female community leaders in the area of operations. ETs should further provide physical protection to and champion dialogue for women's groups and their participation in other community-based peacebuilding activities.

Next Steps

Military Gender Action Plan

Issued in March 2020

Sector Commander Conference

Opportunity to highlight ET role

Workshop Military Gender Action Plan

To be organized for ET Commanders

Pilot Coordination Mechanism

Pilot with Central Sector ETs & Goma field office

As next steps in promoting and streamlining the function of Engagement Teams in MONUSCO, a new Military Gender Action Plan has been issued which also elaborates on the role of MONUSCO Engagement Platoons. The Action Plan was distributed to Sector/Brigade Commanders in March 2020 and will be reissued every quarter to account for rotations in the sectors. A workshop on the Action Plan will be held for ET commanders once the COVID-19 pandemic has subsided; for now, individual orientation briefings are held between new ET commanders and the Force Gender Advisor. The next Sector Commanders Conference in Goma should further include a dedicated session on the role of Engagement Platoons and how to enhance their operational effectiveness. The Central Sector ETs will also run a pilot for a coordination mechanism between Engagement Platoons and substantive sections in Goma field office, planned to start in early 2021.

ACRONYMS

BATT	Battalion
BDE	Brigade
CIMIC	Civil-Military Coordination
CLA	Community Liaison Assistants
COB	Company Operating Bases
DD3R	Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Reintegration, & Resettlement
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ET / ETs	Engagement Team / Engagement Teams
EP / EPs	Engagement Platoon / Engagement Platoons
FARDC	<i>Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo</i>
FC	Force Commander
FIB	MONUSCO Force Intervention Brigade
GFP	Gender Focal Point
HRA	Human Rights Abuses
HRV	Human Rights Violations
IDP	Internally displaced people
JAM	Joint Assessment Mission
JHRO	MONUSCO Joint Human Rights Office
LA	Language Assistants
Lt Gen	Lieutenant General
MONUSCO	UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo
OMA	UN Office of Military Affairs
PEP	Post Exposure Preventive Treatment
POC	Protection of Civilians
RDB	Rapidly Deployable Battalion
SCD	Standing Combat Deployment
SSR	Security Sector Reform
TCC	Troop Contributing Country
TTP	Tactics, Techniques and Procedures
WPA	Women Protection Advisor

FURTHER READING

UN Policies and Guidance

- 2018.01 [Policy on Gender Responsive United Nations Peacekeeping Operations](#).
- 2019.35 [United Nations Field Missions: Preventing and responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence](#) (Policy) (2020).
- [UN System-Wide Strategy on Gender Parity](#) (6 October 2017).
- [ST/SGB/2008/5 Secretary-General Bulletin on the Prohibition of discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority](#) (11 February 2008).
- DPO Resource Package (2020). [Gender Equality and Women, Peace and Security](#).
- DPO Policy Brief (unknown). [Women Transforming Peace Through Peacekeeping](#).
- DPO Key Messages (unknown). [Women, Peace and Security \(WPS\) In Peacekeeping Operations](#).
- DPO Brochure (2019). [Women Transforming Peace](#).
- DPO Brochure (YYY). [Gender Equality in Peacekeeping Operations](#).
- 2020.01 [UN Infantry Battalion Manual \(UNIBAM\)](#).
- Dos Santos Cruz C.A. and Phillips W. [Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers: We need to change the way we are doing business](#). December 2017.
- High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) Report. [Uniting our strengths for peace – politics, partnership and people](#). June 2015.
- UN General Assembly. [Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and its Working Group on the 2007 resumed session*. Revised draft model memorandum of understanding*](#). A/61/19 (Part III). 12 June 2007.
- MONUSCO Military Gender Action Plan. 10 March 2020.
- MONUSCO. [CLA Handbook - A practical field guide for MONUSCO Community Liaison Assistants](#). November 2013.
- DPKO-DFS. [Community Liaison Assistants in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations \(Survey of Practice\)](#). November 2016.

Academic Research & Military Guidance

- Bertolazzi, F. [Women with a Blue Helmet- The Integration of Women and Gender Issues in UN Peacekeeping Mission](#), UN IN-STRAW Working Paper Series, 2010.
- Bjorkhaug I. and Boas. M. [Men, Women and gender-based violence in North Kivu, DRC](#). Fafo Report, 2014.

- Bridges D. and Horsfall D. [*Increasing Operational Effectiveness in UN Peacekeeping – Towards a Gender -Balanced Force*](#). Armed Forces & Society, September 2009.
- [*Commander's Guide to Female Engagement Teams*](#) (Version 3), Centre for Army Lessons Learned, 2011.
- Fitriani. [*Pre-Deployment Training Of Un Women Military Peacekeepers: A Case Study Analysis Of Three Southeast Asian Countries*](#). Cranfield Defence And Security. Cranfield University. 2017.
- Hutchinson, S. [*Leading the Operationalisation of WPS*](#). Security Challenges Vol. 14, No. 2. 2018.
- Kaltiainen, L. [*A growing force? An empirical study on the role of female military peacekeepers in UN peacekeeping operations*](#). Tampere University. 2019.
- Kuehnast, K and Zimmerman, S. [*No Will, No Way: Women, Peace, and Security in Peacekeeping Operations*](#). United States Institute for Peace (USIP). Peace and Stability Operations Journal Online. October 2012.
- Rohwerder B. [*Lessons from Female Engagement Teams*](#). Applied Knowledge Services. January 2015.
- Simic O. [*Moving beyond the numbers: integrating women into peacekeeping operations*](#). Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre (NOREF). Policy Brief. March 2013.

ANNEX

Annex A: Template MONUSCO Force - Six-Months & End of Deployment ET Assessment Report

IMPACT AND EFFECTIVENESS

- What activities did the ET conduct?
 - Number and type of activities
- Who conducted the planning for the activities and what were the decisions based on?
- What were perceptions of the local community?
- Did women interact with you?
 - How did talking to the women support the work of MONUSCO in protecting civilians?
 - What were challenges you experienced while on missions?
- Are there activities you would like to implement, but can't?
 - What are the obstacles (financial/human resources, access, limited force protection availability, etc)?
- What do you think are the operational effects of your work?
 - What was the outcome of talking to the women, was there follow-up activity?
- What do you perceive as tangible successes of the ET?
- What are your recommendations to improve the operation and impact of the ET?

INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT

- How were you perceived by your Unit/Commander?
- How can your Chain of Command support you better?
- What support do you need from FHQ Gender and Child Protection Officer?
- How important is leadership and coordination to your work, and how could it be improved?
- Do you feel respected by your male colleagues?
- What would enable you to do your job more easily and effectively?
- What do you perceive as weaknesses in your team?
 - How could these weaknesses be addressed?
- What do you perceive as strengths of your team?
 - How could these strengths be further utilized to promote MONUSCO's mandate?
- Do you find your work rewarding?

TRAINING

- What training would have facilitated an improved performance of the ET, both prior to the mission as well as during your deployment?

AOB

Is there anything else you would like to share to enhance the employment of the ET?
Can you briefly share a scenario, which you think was successful and you were proud to be part of?

Please add up to 3 good pictures that represent your work.

Annex B: Indicators for implementing the WPS Agenda in Military Components

Source: DPO gender Equality Resource Package, p.123

Core indicator (to be deployed across all missions)

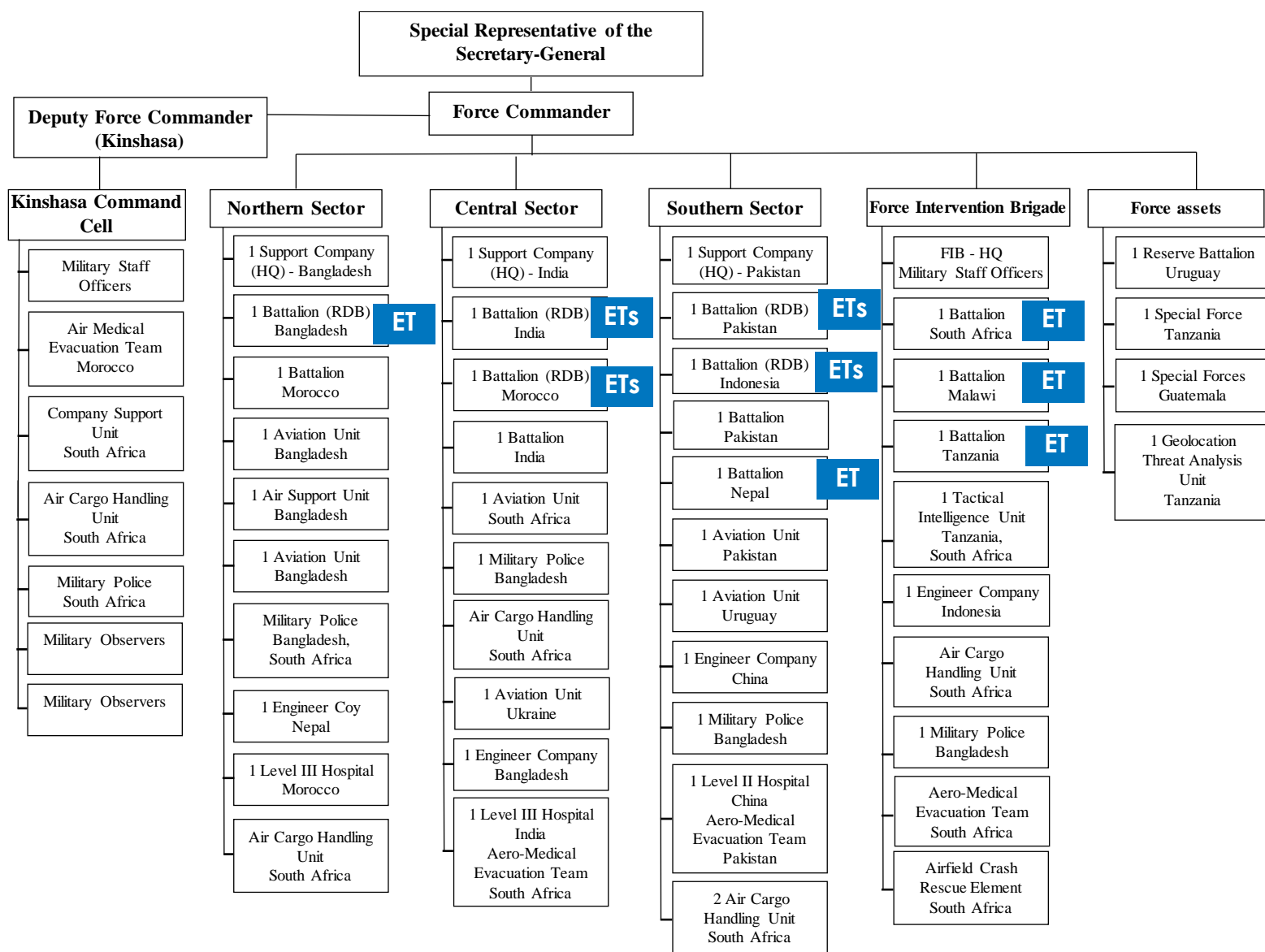
- # of gender responsive operations by the UN military, including Engagement Platoon activities, that are carried out to protect civilians.

Working Elective indicators (intended for selective use as applicable to each mission mandate)

- # of women deployed to mission areas
- # of women staff officers involved in the FHQ planning process.
- % of mission functions that engage with women civil society organisations to inform key processes.
- # of times the Force Commander and senior officers engage with women's civil society organisations to inform key processes.
- % of military operational staff work (orders, annexes, FRAGOs, directives) across entire mission that include gender-specific needs of population and a gendered response to these needs (e.g., safe corridors for movement after an operation by the FIB).
- # of Quick Impact Projects that involve women as well as men? How many QIPs support women and girls?

Annex C: MONUSCO Force Organizational Chart, including ETs

(as of MONUSCO's FY20-21 Budget)



Abbreviations: RBD - Rapidly Deployable Battalion, ATU - Air Transport Unit