

Women in Peace Operations: Reflections on UNSCR 1325, Gender Roles and Motherhood from Uganda's Green and Blue Berets

Dr. Katusiime Elizabeth and Dr. Jacqueline Nakaiza

Abstract

Motherhood is an essential aspect of women's lives, even more important than marriage in terms of social, religious and political identity. In Africa, mothers were bound at home to nature and raise children. With education and integration into the global economy, the advancement of women's rights, mothers are formerly employed even in patriarchal enclaves like the military. UNSCR 1325 called for, incorporation of a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations for the inclusion and meaningful participation of women. But, opportunities for uniformed women to serve on peace keeping operations are limited. Traditional practices, prejudices, institutional and cultural barriers that impede women from joining the military to enable them effectively contribute to global peace and stability still exist. Liberal feminist theorists argued that affirmative action, equal rights/opportunities are re-distributive measures until a meritocratic gender restructuring of society occurs. While Marxist feminists observe that the subordinate position women occupy in society might compel them to commit crime as a means of economic support. In this paper, examine how international policies, guidelines and practice have adhered to UNSCR 1325 when deploying forces for peacekeeping operations to enable the meaningful participation of women.

Introduction

Motherhood and family are the backbone of African Society sharpened by social and cultural expectations and gender norms. International policy frameworks such as United Nations Security Resolutions (UNSCR) 1325 have been put in place to address women's peace and security issues. However, how these policy frameworks affect motherhood and family has not been deeply reflected on, especially for women in security forces deployed in peacekeeping missions (the Green and Blue Berets). This paper attempted to respond to the questions. How is the correlation between motherhood, women's participation in peacekeeping missions considered? This study was guided by African feminism theorisation and complimented by the liberal feminism thinking that has enabled women to attain education and thus participate in peacekeeping missions. The study established that motherhood roles greatly affect women's participation in addressing women's peace and security issues despite attempts by the security UNSCR 1325.

Background

Motherhood is widely recognised as an essential aspect of women's lives in Africa and beyond, even more important than marriage in terms of identity, social status, political and religious authority (Stephens, 2013). Women's lives were and to a great extent are still organised and their capacities defined by their status as mothers or potential mothers which is about nurturing, caring, facilitating, and restraining that are used to explain the position of women in society. Historically in a typical African society, mothers were bound at home to be able to fulfil this natural responsibility of nurturing and raising children. However, over the years, through education and integration into the global world order that has increasingly advocated for the advancement of women's rights and equality between men and women, mothers have got

involved more in formal employment including spheres that were predominantly a reserve for men like the military.

Despite all the advocacy and advancement of women's rights, the historical norm where women were excluded from recruitment and assignments into the military remains (Levy, 2020). Most forces still embody traditional and conservative macho cultures (Robinson and O'Hanlon, 2020) where they deemed that armed forces demanded different roles for men and women, and it was a preserve for men who could master the strength and courage to kill the enemy (Maiyo, 2015). Even when uniformed forces have recruited women, they do not participate equally. Twenty years since the landmark resolution 1325 by the UN Security Council calling for, 'incorporation of a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations, and ensuring that, where appropriate, field operations include a gender component.' Opportunities for uniformed women to serve on peace keeping operations are limited. Traditional practices, prejudices, institutional and cultural barriers that impede women from joining the military to enable them effectively to contribute to global peace and stability still exist. Unlike their male counterparts, female peace keepers go to missions with extra baggage. As mothers even when they are on mission, they retain their motherhood responsibilities where they are expected to be efficient and excel on mission as well.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is that existing literature on military motherhood and parenting for female peacekeepers in Africa is generally non-existent. Motherhood naturally comes with an identity shift and one ceases to be independent, instead they become an extension of their children, with a major purpose of parenting and raising their children (Racheal, 2020). The United Nations is progressively calling for an increase and meaningful participation of women in peacekeeping operations (UN, 2018). The UN has gone ahead to enact resolutions and declarations (UN, 2018) to which member countries have committed to deploy and have more women to meaningfully participate in peacekeeping as countries navigate the difficult path from conflicts to peace. Antonio Guterres, the UN Secretary General has severally reiterated that this is not just about numbers, involvement of women in peacekeeping missions leads to more credible protection responses that meet the needs of all and also addresses the question of sexual exploitation and abuse, and gender-based violence by male peacekeepers (UN, 2019) that has challenged the UN as an institution for decades. Back home, Africa is not only home to half of the ongoing conflicts in the world (Escola de Cultura de Pau, 2021) but also home to half of ongoing UN mandated peacekeeping missions (UN, 2021) including the African Union Transitional Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). As of 30 September 2021, only 8% of women were deployed as part of troops in UN peacekeeping missions (UN, 2021), while according to the available statistics, 7% of women were deployed as peacekeepers in Somalia on behalf of both the African Union and the United Nations (United Nations, 2019). With the new Agenda for Peace where Regional Organisations are expected to take lead in peace keeping missions, coupled with increasing calls by the UN for the recruitment and deployment of women in national forces and peacekeeping operations, it is important to understand how international policies, guidelines and practice have catered to the motherhood and parenting responsibilities of women and the wellbeing of the children they parent.

The objective of this paper is to examine efforts of the armed forces in Uganda to respond to the UN resolution 1325 to have more women recruited in the forces and sent to peacekeeping

operations. It also explores how national and international norms, guidelines and practice have approached the notion of motherhood and parenting of female peacekeepers to enable the meaningful participation of women. However, regarding UN Resolution 1325, we focus on the pillar of participation specifically looking at how the UPDF has adhered to the tenets of motherhood.

Theoretical Underpinning

To guide the analysis on women and peace operations, the article employs the Liberal Feminist Theoretical perspective. This theory argues that, that “society has a false belief that women are by nature less intellectually and physically capable than men” Liberal feminism is the traditional standpoint of the first wave of feminism (Baehr, 2007). Feminism is the movement to end exploitation and oppression and feminism is not static but evolving. The core principle of feminism is that women have something to contribute to every aspect of the world. But as an oppressed group, women have not achieved the necessary reward and they lack full participation in society activities and insist that feminism research should not be for critique but transformation. By ending all forms of oppression such as individual oppression, Institutional oppression and societal or cultural oppression that are propagated through social norms, roles, rituals, and language re-enforced in societal groups.

Therefore, liberal feminism is core when deconstructing contemporary conceptualization of feminism. Liberal feminism underscores the principle that women should have equal opportunities as men especially the opportunity to excel in various fields including providing peace and security including but not limited to battlefields. This would be one way of levelling the playing ground for both men and women boys and girls in the provision of peace and security environment. Modern liberal feminists argue that patriarchal society fuses sex and gender, making only those jobs that are associated with the traditionally feminine appropriate for women to pursue. We continuously see women in peace missions taking positions related to care such as medical care, and welfare and always deployed in what is considered non-risky areas.

The wave of feminism focusing on rights has been criticized as having been focusing on rights and what they have been able to achieve is to reclaim their rights to use “lipstick, high heels and in addition to using tattoos” which is being done by current day feminism. But liberal feminism and radical feminism have created a change of status quo in the individual, the structures, institutions and societal or communities. Some liberal feminist in Uganda have lived to see the government's deliberate intention to support girl child education through affirmative action, a better-quality number of girls enrolling, retained and completing school education. Liberal theory argument for empowerment of women and girls through education increased the on number women employed most often in strategic positions including security, and leadership positions in politics.

Localization of UNCR 1325 has resulted in women's participation in politics and the number of women has deliberately increased including the number of women participating in security forces such as Uganda Peoples Defence Forces UPDF standing at 12% and Uganda Police. However, the increase in women's participation in politics and security forces or Peace Missions has not occurred without backlash.

Methodology

We adopted a qualitative approach to analyse how the UPDF was responding to UNSCR 1325 and how the different national and international guidelines are addressing the key targets of this resolution. One of the key barriers barring women from meaningful participation in the security sector and peacekeeping operations arises from their gendered responsibilities of motherhood and parenting. In this paper, we present findings from interviews with the UPDF and UPF officers who have served in peacekeeping operations. Specifically, findings are from officers who have served under UN peacekeeping operations ‘the blue berets’ and those who have served under the African Union in Somalia the ‘green berets.’ Uganda has contributed troops to different peacekeeping operations under the UN and the AU. We also engaged with policy makers in Uganda’s security sector, at the regional and international level. We triangulated these with a qualitative review of policy documents to cater for bias.

Rationale for More Female Peacekeepers in Peace Operations

Resolution 1325 called on the UN to increase the representation and participation of women within its administration and field based operations and adequately train peacekeeping personnel to enhance women’s active role in conflict resolution (Binder et al., 2008). While the New Agenda for Peace calls for dismantling of Patriarchal structures with regard to women peace and security and calls for more political will to precipitate meaningful participation for women. This Agenda calls for a global push to accelerate gender equality commitments in all areas. However, transformative progress on the women and peace and security agenda requires consideration of the role of men, who have traditionally dominated decision-making, and addressing intergenerational power dynamics (United Nations, 2023a).

The patriarchal sentiments aside, there’s widespread recognition of the importance of increasing women’s participation in peacekeeping operations and integrating gender perspectives into the work of these operations. Increased participation of women in peacekeeping operations is advantageous because; It can help to shift norms about women serving in operations, with knock-on economic and security benefits. Equally, this can promote the norm that women can play an active role in the military, including in operations. In the process, the increase and acceptance of, and demand for, women in the military can help create significant formal sector employment opportunities. Moreover, in developing countries women comprise of less than 10% of armed forces personnel in developing countries.

Second, one of the arguments for an increased and meaningful participation of women in peacekeeping operations is the access and entry in the host countries especially the gender-segregated societies. Women are uniquely skilled in negotiating entry an aspect that has benefits from an intelligence-gathering perspective and in assisting particular demographics in conflict-affected contexts – including survivors of gender-based violence and those at risk of being trafficked (Karim and Beardsley 2013). Accordingly, female peacekeepers can access populations and venues that are closed to men, thereby improving intelligence about potential security risks. They are also better able to screen women during searches, helping to close a security loophole that extremists increasingly exploit. In addition, the presence of female officers improves access to community members, thereby amplifying situational awareness and helping military commanders fulfil their mandates, including the protection of civilians (Bigio

& Vogelstein, 2018). Women peacekeepers are enablers to build trust and confidence with local communities, thus help prevent and reduce conflict and confrontation. More importantly, they inspire, encourage, create role models for women and girls to become a meaningful part of peace and political processes (UNDP, 2020).

Perhaps as a result, there is some evidence that missions with more women personnel are more likely to meet their mandate and bring sustainable peace (Strickland and Duvvury, 2003), although this may be associated with the types of missions where women personnel are more likely to be sent. At an AMISOM conference one of the commanders observed that, “we cannot do without women in peacekeeping situations because women are more approachable. Women will handle gender related issues better because they not only relate but are also more critical and pay attention to detail’ (AMISOM, 2017).

In particular, a greater presence of women in peacekeeping operations appears to be associated with lower rates of sexual misconduct by peacekeepers themselves. This is a significant issue for UN operations where a representative survey of women aged 18 to 30 in Monrovia, Liberia, suggested that over one fourth of respondents reported transactional sex with a peacekeeper (Karim and Beardsley, 2016). In an interview with a UPDF officer, he observed that, ‘the presence of women at a peacekeeping mission gives some form of comfort and calmness to the men even if you don’t have relationships with them and in a way this saves us from committing sexual related crimes.’¹ This is corroborated by authors who concur that, increasing the number of women might help curb the problem of peacekeeper misconduct (Ansorg & Haaß, 2019).

It is also argued that, women peacekeepers were perceived as potentially more complimentary to humanitarian roles — specifically to communication with the women and children among civilian populations (Mowell, 2018). Besides, meaningful participation of women in peace operations broadens the perspective on conflict management, allows for more inclusive political resolutions, and, in the end, and improves international peacebuilding strategies. It has also been shown that there is a direct correlation between the meaningful participation of women in peacekeeping and the performance and effectiveness of peacekeeping units (Pulliam, 2020) .

Localising UNSCR 1325 in Uganda

UNSCR 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security addresses the impact of war and conflict on women and calls for increasing women’s role in conflict resolution and peace-making. Resolution 1325 is premised on four pillars, participation, protection, prevention and relief and recovery. The resolution highlights the different experiences of women and men during and after conflict and the need for gender perspectives to be incorporated into peace building, peacekeeping and post conflict reconstruction. The New Agenda for Peace calls for an international effort to “dismantle the patriarchy” by investing in women’s participation in peace processes (Gowan, 2023). However, this can only be achieved through the localisation of Resolution 1325.

The Government of Uganda through the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) developed a National Action Plan as a guide for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the subsequent and complimentary legislations. We note that, since 2000, the UN has

¹ Interview with a UPDF Officer in Nakasero 18/042023

continued to adopt other resolutions and initiatives aimed at addressing the underrepresentation of women in UN peace operations.

The subsequent resolutions are: 1) Resolution 1820 (2008) that addresses conflict-related sexual violence is a tactic of warfare, and calls for the training of troops on preventing and responding to sexual violence, deployment of more women to peace operations, and enforcement of zero tolerance policies for peacekeepers with regards to acts of sexual exploitation and abuse. 2) Resolution 1888 (2009) that complements the earlier resolution 1820 by calling on leadership to address conflict-related sexual violence through deployment of teams (military and gender experts) to critical conflict areas, and improved monitoring and reporting on conflict trends and perpetrators. 3) Resolution 1889 (2009) which addresses obstacles to women's participation in peace processes and calls for development of global indicators to track the implementation of Resolution 1325, and improvement of international and national responses to the needs of women in conflict and post-conflict settings. 4) Resolution 1960 (2010) that calls for an end to sexual violence in armed conflict, particularly against women and girls, and provides measures aimed at ending impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence, including through sanctions and reporting measures. 5) Resolution 2106 (2013) that provides for operational guidance on addressing sexual violence and calls for the further deployment of Women Protection Advisers. 6) Resolution 2122 (2013) that calls on all parties to facilitate peace talks with equal and full participation of women in decision-making; aims to increase women's participation in peace making by increasing resources for women in conflict zones; and acknowledges the critical contributions of women's civil society organizations. 7) Resolution 2242 (2015) that reaffirms commitment to resolution 1325 on its 15th anniversary. This resolution highlights the role of women in countering violent extremism and addresses the differential impact of terrorism on the human rights of women and girls. 8) Resolution 2493 (2019) which urges UN member states to recommit to the women, peace and security agenda, including creating safe environments for women leaders, women peacebuilders, human rights defenders and political actors. It asks States to facilitate the full, equal and meaningful participation of women; address threats, harassment and violence; and remain committed to increasing the number of uniformed and civilian women in peacekeeping operations. And 9) Resolution 2538 (2020) which recognizes "the indispensable role of women in increasing the overall performance and effectiveness of peacekeeping operations" It offers clear direction on how member states can increase the deployment of female peacekeepers. It also supports the need to ensure that the working culture is gender-sensitive for women, and addresses threats and violence against them (UN Security Council, 2020).

These resolutions are further complimented by the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018-2028. Accordingly, Gender parity is essential to achieving peace and security by supporting more inclusive societies. Thus Gender Parity strategy is instrumental in guiding the creation of an enabling and conducive work environment that allows both men and women to realize their full potential. For example, with UN peacekeeping missions, if a Member State chose to rotate members out after six months, the cost incurred had to be borne by the Member State as the UN policy caters for one rotation every 12 months at the cost of the United Nations. However, according to a recently-introduced policy, women peacekeepers with children under the age of seven are able to deploy for a period of six months instead of the usual 12 months and be repatriated at UN expense (Keita, 2018).

Therefore, Uganda's security forces (UPDF and UPF) have taken on the localisation agenda for Resolution 1325 grounded on protecting women's rights. The Uganda Police Force developed a gender policy (2018) and established the Family and Child Protection Units at all police stations to handle cases of SGBV.

The Uganda Peoples' Defence Force (UPDF) promotes enrolment of qualified women into the Force and ensures that for every deployment comprises of at least 10percent are women. UPDF has a Directorate of Women Affairs headed by a female officer at the rank of Colonel. Currently UPDF has one female at the rank of Lieutenant General and one Brigadier.

Reflections on Resolution 1325 and Barriers for Meaningful participation of the Green and Blue Berets at Peacekeeping Operations

The UPDF has contributed troops to a number of peacekeeping missions under the UN and the African Union. For example, over the past two decades, the AU and its regional economic communities (RECs) and RMs have undertaken 27 peace operations. For example, the African Transitional Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) effectively and meaningfully employed gender officers and established focal points. Female military and police officers were praised for their contribution to safeguarding peace and security in Somalia. However, most African peace operations have made little progress in ensuring gender parity across military, police and civilian components. Despite demonstrated value and effectiveness of women's inclusion in peace processes, their participation in PSOs remains numerically and substantively low (Stanyard et al., 2023).

For the UN missions, from the 12 UN peacekeeping missions, 8 had gender units, with a total of 44 gender advisers or gender affairs officers, 14 police gender advisers, and 33 appointed military gender advisers. Four larger multidimensional missions were headed by senior gender advisers (P-5 level) in 2022(UN Women, 2023). The Security Council pronounced itself on the importance of women's participation in peacekeeping operations. Notable in this regard was the adoption of resolution 2242 in October 2015. The resolution urged the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs "to ensure the necessary gender analysis and technical gender expertise" throughout the life-cycle of missions (United Nations, 2019).

In July 2018, the Elsie Initiative published a baseline study which was the first attempt to systematically gather, analyse, and categorize the barriers female soldiers face in their pursuit of deploying on peacekeeping operations. Fourteen different barriers that can prevent women from deploying on peacekeeping operations were identified and organized into six main categories: equal access to opportunities, deployment criteria, the working environment, family constraints, equal treatment during deployment, and career-advancement opportunities (Ghittoni et al., 2018). The gendered perceptions of the role of women, lack of family-friendly policies, and insufficient women in national militaries and police forces are some of the reasons for the lack of gender parity (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2018).

Operationalisation of the UNSCR 1325s Pillar of Participation by the UPDF

As observed earlier, this pillar calls for the increasing participation of women at all levels of decision making including in national, regional and international institutions. This paper however focuses on the meaningful participation of women in peace operations. This section

analyses the efforts of the UPDF to increase the number of women in the forces and how it has addressed the barriers that would prevent women from deploying to peace operations.

Central to increasing and ensuring affirmative action and meaningful participation of women in peace operations is ensuring that women are recruited in the forces. Currently it is estimated that 12 % of the officers and men of the UPDF are female. However, we observe from the guidelines of UPDF recruitment that institutional barriers still exist with regard to women. For example, in a recent recruitment drive, the criteria for recruitment required one to; i) to be between the years of 18 – 25 or 18 – 30 if they are to enlist as regular or professional respectively; ii) must be single with no children to avoid family distractions; iii) regular recruits should possess a minimum education of S.4 or S.6 with a bias in science subjects such as chemistry, mathematics and physics; and professionals should be holders of degrees in Medicine, engineering, chemistry, education or possess vocational skills.(Ministry of Defence and Veteran Affairs, 2019).

The requirement for recruitment as outlined are clearly designed to eliminate a very high percentage of girls and women from joining the forces because certainly many who would have wished to join cannot meet the minimum requirements. For instance, even when many meet the age requirement, in Uganda the magnitude of teenage pregnancy is very high. Statistics indicate that 25% of women in Uganda give birth before they turn 18 (Uganda, 2021). That besides, the reproductive age of women in Uganda is between 18 and 30, thus requiring intending recruits to have no children is an institutional barrier for women (Ochen & Primus, 2023). No wonder many report to recruitment centres with forged documents (Aliga, 2022; Kasaira, 2015). Then to worsen everything is the for recruits to have a bias in science education and science oriented professional courses because very few girls take on science based courses and subjects (Namatende-Sakwa & Longman, 2013). Therefore, the aforementioned is a clear indicator that there are already existing institutional barriers to recruitment in the forces, which naturally feeds into the limited number of women that can participate in peace operations.

Motherhood as a key component of gender roles which can influence the meaningful participation of women at peace operations, we interrogated maternity leave, paternity leave, promotions for mothers within the UPDF and those serving in peace operations and considerations at deployment in peace operations. We analysed whether these are incorporated into the institutional norms, if they are written and how they are implemented.

Regrettably, the UPDF Act of 2005 is generally silent on these questions,(Law Reform Commission of Uganda, 2005) and we were not able to access the UPDF Human Resources Manual or the manual with guidelines to recruitment and deployment of mothers to peace operations. Thus we could not reliably determine whether the UPDF has written institutional norms regarding motherhood, gender roles and deployment of women. We were also not able to determine whether during the various trainings and while deploying, sanitary towels are provided or part of the consignments for females going for peace operations.

An expose of Motherhood, Gender Roles for the Blue and Green Berets

In this section we share the experiences and challenges of Uganda's female peacekeepers and how they motherhood and gender roles have been impacted.

Deployment to peace operations for Uganda officers from the forces is primarily motivated by financial gains for women and men respectively. Those who go to missions are paid \$1028

which is way above their monthly salaries. For women however, the liberation, education and empowerment to join and serve in peace operations has often left many female peacekeepers traumatised about the opposite sex. This is because, Uganda and Africa generally remain patriarchal societies. Hence even where women are deployed to peace operations, many times it seen as a favour or reward not merit. Thus there is still preference for women to be deployed in softer environments that do not require astute decision making. Where women get deployed in very hard circumstances many times it is as a result of feuding with their bosses so it is regarded as a punishment.

Regarding reproductive roles, some of the peacekeepers we interacted with reported that the environment at peace missions naturally alters their menstrual cycles and distorts their reproductive system. There's one in particular who observed that for the 3 years she served at the mission due to the stress, she never received her monthly periods. And even when she returned from her tour of duty, it took her a very long time to produce because the body and hormones had adjusted. Besides, there are many women who have returned from peace keeping and lost their families because of their failure to perform and fulfil their gender roles of motherhood and the reproductive duties. Others who have lost out on a settled life of building families thus they end up in short term relationships or temporary family situations. There are also those who have lost their children while at duty. For example, there's one who reported that during her absence and the lack of motherly care and guidance, her teenage daughter conceived. For some of the peacekeepers, because of their absence while at mission, their husbands get angry and abandon the responsibility of provision to the families and they end up getting forced to spend all their money. There are those who co-invested with their husbands only to return and end up in property wrangles with their men.

UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000) marked a critical shift in recognising women not just as victims but as active agents in peace operations (Bell & O'Rourke, 2010). On the battlefield and in mission zones, women personnel improve community access, build trust, and enhance the credibility of peace operations (Georgetown IWPS, 2021). Yet studies show their participation remains low—often under 5% in military roles and gender expertise is under-resourced (UN Women, 2020; Tishkov, 2023). Women in missions help protect civilians and lower misconduct rates, but structural barriers and limited implementation persist (UN Women, 2020). To manage this effectively, missions must integrate gender analysis early, appoint gender advisors, secure dedicated funding, and monitor meaningful participation—not just symbolic inclusion. Scaling up women's roles, especially in decision-making and frontline deployments, remains crucial for lasting peace (UN Dept. Peacekeeping, 2011).

Benefits of Implementing the UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan NAP in Uganda

Uganda's commitment to the WPS agenda, particularly through its third NAP (2021-2025), has resulted in tangible outcomes that strengthen the country's peace and security architecture. Localization of WPS Agenda: Uganda has successfully decentralized the NAP, with over 20 districts developing and adopting Local Action Plans (LAPs). This innovative approach ensures local ownership, strengthens accountability, and transforms global commitments into concrete actions on the ground that address specific community conflict issues, such as land disputes and gender-based violence (UN Women, 2025). Strengthened Legal and Policy Framework; The NAP has contributed to creating a national environment that promotes gender equality. It provides a systematic framework that aligns and operationalizes national laws and policies (such as those related to gender-based violence) and international obligations, such as

the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Sustainable Development Goals (Government of Uganda, 2021). Increased Women's Participation in Governance: There has been an increased representation of women in Parliament and local governance structures, which is critical for mainstreaming gender perspectives in decision-making processes, but gaps still exist in key security institutions (UWONET, 2025).

Improved Coordination and Monitoring; The NAP, particularly its current iteration (NAP III), includes detailed operational and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plans. This allows for better coordination between government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and the private sector, which promotes policy coherence and helps track progress on WPS-related goals (Government of Uganda, 2021). The NAP recognizes and formalizes the critical role of women peacebuilders at the grassroots level. Women's rights organizations receive assistance in combating SGBV, promoting justice for survivors, and engaging in community-level conflict prevention and mediation, which is critical for social cohesion (UN Women, 2025).

Despite these benefits, several entrenched challenges impede the NAP's full realization. Inadequate Financial Commitment: The most significant obstacle is the severe under-resourcing of the WPS agenda. NAP initiatives are often underfunded, with women's rights organizations receiving disproportionately small amounts of aid. This lack of dedicated material resources limits the scope and sustainability of planned activities (UWONET, 2025). Structural and Normative Barriers: Deep-seated patriarchal norms and structural resistance continue to undermine the meaningful participation of women. Women attempting to enter non-traditional roles, particularly in the security and defence sectors, often face social and institutional resistance, which keeps women underrepresented in high-level decision-making and peacekeeping deployments (Peaceau.org, 2015). Data and Capacity Gaps: While data collection exists, challenges persist in ensuring the consistent collection of sex- and age-disaggregated data across all sectors, making it difficult to accurately track the prevalence and impact of SGBV and measure progress effectively. Furthermore, insufficient training and a limited understanding of 'gender mainstreaming' among some state actors hinder the systematic integration of gender perspectives into security policies and practices (OSCE, 2014; Peaceau.org, 2015).

In summary, while Uganda's NAP provides a vital structure for the WPS agenda, its success hinges on moving beyond political commitments to securing sustained financial investment and dismantling the normative barriers that still limit women's full, equal, and meaningful participation (UWONET, 2025).

Conclusion

In this paper, we conclude by arguing that a lot of millage has been achieved towards the operationalisation of the pillar of participation of women in peace operations. However, there is still a lot more that needs to be done to address the restrictive and elimination policies and barriers for women right from the point of recruitment to deployment. There should be concerted efforts to address and cater to the motherhood roles of female peacekeepers so that as they sacrifice for humanity, their natural gender role of motherhood is not lost. UNSCR 1325 recognizes the crucial role of women, including mothers, in peace and security, emphasizing their unique contributions to conflict resolution, civilian protection, and community trust-building in frontline areas (Bell & O'Rourke, 2010; UN Women, 2020).

Mothers in peace missions frequently use caregiving, empathy, and communication skills to reduce tensions and support vulnerable populations, thereby increasing mission credibility and effectiveness (Georgetown IWPS, 2021). Despite these advantages, structural barriers, low representation, and inconsistent policy compliance continue to limit their full impact, with women comprising less than 5% of deployed military personnel in some operations (Tishkov, 2023). To maximize the effectiveness of UNSCR 1325, missions should strengthen policy compliance through monitoring mechanisms and gender-sensitive deployment strategies. Increasing recruitment and meaningful participation by women, particularly mothers.

To maximize the effectiveness of UNSCR 1325, missions should strengthen policy compliance through monitoring mechanisms and gender-sensitive deployment strategies. Increasing the recruitment and meaningful participation of women, particularly mothers, ensures that their perspectives are considered in operational decisions. Gender-sensitive training for all personnel, dedicated funding for women-led initiatives, and the appointment of gender advisors are all required to sustain these efforts. Inclusive decision-making structures that incorporate women at leadership levels will further enhance the peacekeeping mandate. Overall, integrating mothers and women strategically into peace operations is not only a matter of equity but a practical approach to achieving lasting peace and security.

References

- AMISOM (2019) AMISOM roots for more women in peacekeeping operations. <https://amisom-au.org/2019/04/amisom-roots-for-more-women-in-peacekeeping-operations/>
- Escola de Cultura de Pau. Alert 2021! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding. Barcelona: Icaria, 2021.
- IDEA (N.D) Women in Combat Pros and Cons. Sisters in Arms. <https://sistersinarms.ca/history/women-in-combat-pros-and-cons/>
- Kavuma M. Richard (2006) From Kitchens to Boardrooms. Uganda and Millennium Goals. <http://www.archive.observer.ug/specials/ugecon/econ04271.php>
- Levy Ido (2020) Women in Combat: Bad for Military Effectiveness? Georgetown Public Policy Review. <http://gppreview.com/2020/02/25/women-combat-bad-military-effectiveness/>
- Lori Robinson and Michael E. O’Hanlon (2020) Women Warriors: The ongoing story of integrating and diversifying the American armed forces. <https://www.brookings.edu/essay/women-warriors-the-ongoing-story-of-integrating-and-diversifying-the-armed-forces/>
- Maiyo JK (2015) Women should not serve in military combat. The Defender Magazine
- Martin Kitubi (2017) Defence ministry to send more women on peacekeeping mission. https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1448972/defence-ministry-send-women-peacekeeping-mission
- Rachel Bertsche (2020) When Your Name Becomes ‘Mom,’ Do Your Other Identities Matter? Finding the road back to yourself after parenthood takes over. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/16/parenting/motherhood-identity-crisis.html>
- Stephens, Rhiannon (2013) A history of African motherhood: the case of Uganda, 700-1900 (No. 127). Cambridge University Press.
- United Nations (2018) Action for peacekeeping (A4P). Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/action-for-peacekeeping-a4p>
- United Nations (2018) Secretary-General's remarks to Security Council High-Level Debate on Collective Action to Improve UN Peacekeeping Operations. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?vIwndbgBg3AA>
- United Nations (2019) Service and Sacrifice: Ugandan 'Blue Helmets' support UN efforts to bring peace to Somalia. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/un-news/service-and-sacrifice-ugandan-blue-helmets-support-un-efforts-to-bring-peace-to-somalia>
- United Nations (2019) Women must be at ‘centre of peacekeeping decision-making’, UN chief tells Security Council. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/04/1036511>
- United Nations (2021) Troop-Contributing Countries achieving gender parity targets. United Nations Peacekeeping. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/gender>
- United Nations (2021) United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, Special Political Missions and Other Political Presences. <https://www.unmissions.org/>

Government of Uganda. (2021). *National Action Plan III on Women, Peace and Security 2021-2025*. Retrieved from

https://www.un.org/shestandsforpeace/sites/www.un.org.shestandsforpeace/files/uganda_nap_2021-2025.pdf

OSCE. (2014). *OSCE Study on National Action Plans on the Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. Retrieved from <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/0/125727.pdf>

Peaceau.org. (2015). *Consultative Meeting on UNSCR 1325 Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/report-consultative-meeting-on-unscr-1325-finaleng-6-.pdf>

UN Women. (2025). *From Global Commitments to Local Action: Uganda's Pioneering Journey in Advancing Women, Peace and Security*. Retrieved from <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/stories/news/2025/10/from-resolution-to-reality-how-uganda-has-implemented-united-nations-security-council-adopted-resolution-1325-on-women-peace-and-security>

UWONET. (2025). *UWONET Joins National Commemoration of the 25th Anniversary of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security*. Retrieved from <https://www.uwonet.or.ug/commemorating25unscr1325>

Bell, C., & O'Rourke, C. (2010). *Peace agreements or pieces of paper? The impact of UNSCR 1325 on peace processes and their agreements*. *International & Comparative Law Quarterly*, 59(4), 941-980. doi:10.1017/S002058931000062X

Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. (2021). *Gendered impacts on operational effectiveness of UN peace operations*.

Tishkov, V. (2023). *Gender perspective in UN police peacekeeping*. *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations*, 23(1), 7-19. doi:10.22363/2313-0660-2023-23-1-7-19

UN Women. (2020). *Keeping the peace in an increasingly militarised world: Global study on the implementation of UNSCR 1325*.

United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations. (2011). *Greater action needed to include women in peacekeeping*.