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Robert U. Nagel, Kate Fin & Julia Maenza

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RESEARCH ARTICLE



You Cannot Improve What You Do Not Measure – The Gendered Dimensions of UN PKO Data

Robert U. Nagel ^a, Kate Fin^b and Julia Maenza^a

^aInstitute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS), Georgetown University, Washington, DC, USA; ^bSearch for Common Ground, Washington, DC, USA

ABSTRACT

UN peacekeeping operations have introduced new data-based systems such as the Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE) and the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS). Simultaneously, UN leadership has repeatedly made the case that more women in peacekeeping will make peacekeeping more effective. We argue and show that these initiatives while occurring concurrently have been separate and that there is a lack of gender mainstreaming in the data-based approaches. We contend that this has negative consequences: It produces incomplete data regarding threats and needs of local beneficiaries and peacekeepers, it impedes performance assessment, and it leaves inefficiencies unaddressed.

KEYWORDS

Peacekeeping; gender; data; intervention; UN

Introduction

Peacekeeping missions operate in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environments, either during or after armed, lethal conflict (Stiehm and Townsend 2002; Fortna 2004; Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon 2019). This means data, information, and intelligence are fundamental to good decision-making and assessing performance. Data collection and analysis are critical for understanding risks, anticipating threats, mitigating harms, and responding to violent incidents. The United Nations Department of Peace Operations (UN DPO), like other actors in the humanitarian sector, has heard the calls for evidence-based decision-making to increase the effectiveness of peace operations (Bradt 2009; Abilova and Novosseloff 2016; de Coning and Brusset 2018; Duursma and Karlsrud 2018). In response the UN has made efforts to become more data-driven, introducing two major initiatives: the *Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise* (SAGE) and the *Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System* (CPAS).

Concurrent with these developments the UN DPO in 2018 published its *Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy* – setting new numerical targets for uniformed women’s participation in peacekeeping operations (PKOs) for the next decade – and a *Gender Responsive UN Peacekeeping Policy*, which framed gender responsiveness as essential to operational effectiveness and efficiency. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has vocally supported these efforts, emphasizing that more women in peacekeeping results in more

effective peacekeeping. Despite happening at the same time, the efforts to make peacekeeping more data-driven and more gender-responsive have occurred separately from each other, resulting in a lack of gender mainstreaming of SAGE and CPAS.

In this article, we argue that the lack of gender mainstreaming in UN PKO data collection and analysis efforts has negative consequences for both local beneficiaries and PKOs. Specifically, we contend that it has four negative implications: First, it results in incomplete and insufficient data regarding threats for both beneficiaries and peacekeepers. Second, it results in incomplete and insufficient data regarding the needs of local beneficiaries and how peacekeepers' actions impact different segments of local populations. Third, within missions the lack of data and analysis leaves potential inefficiencies hidden and unaddressed. Fourth, the lack of baseline knowledge impedes performance assessment and improvement efforts, which results in continued inefficiencies, security risks, and shortcomings in performing mandated tasks and addressing the needs of local beneficiaries.

For this study we conducted interviews with mission personnel and civil society members in three UN PKO contexts: the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). Our 78 semi-structured interviews (39 women and 39 men, 58 UN peacekeepers and 20 civil society representatives) lasted 45–60 min and included military and police peacekeepers, civilian Joint Operations Centre (JOC) personnel, information specialists, senior mission leadership, and representatives from civil society organizations.¹ In addition to interviews, we reviewed UN DPO and mission-specific Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) documents relating to SAGE and CPAS from all three missions that they shared upon our request. Additionally, we reviewed UN DPO policy and strategy documents such as the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy, Gender Responsive UN Peacekeeping Policy, and publicly available documents and information on SAGE and CPAS. We chose the three missions for two primary reasons: to capture the diversity of operating contexts and representations of gender in traditional and multi-dimensional stabilization missions, and second, the existence of stable enough infrastructure to enable remote interviews using online platforms throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

This paper contributes to two strands of research. First, we draw on and add to the growing body of research on information collection and analysis efforts by UN PKOs (Shetler-Jones 2008; Dorn 2009; Norheim-Martinsen and Ravndal 2011; Abilova and Novosseloff 2016; Duursma 2017, 2018; Perera 2017; de Coning and Brusset 2018; Duursma and Karlsrud 2018; Laurence 2019; Haeri 2020; Shamoug et al. 2020). In applying a gender lens, we offer an important contribution that can help address current shortcomings in UN PKOs and open new avenues for further research (Gizelis and Olsson 2017). Second, we contribute to the debate on operational effectiveness and the potential impact of uniformed women (Bridges and Horsfall 2009; Henry 2012; Karim and Beardsley 2017; Pruitt 2016; Wilén 2020). We show that UN claims of women's contribution to operational effectiveness are not rooted in systematic analyses and that this is tied to the lack of gender mainstreaming in data collection. We propose four changes for UN PKOs to correct these weaknesses and capitalize on the systems' potential: improving internal access to data and reporting, establishing mechanisms for regular community input,

collecting gender-disaggregated data systematically, and undertaking systematic analysis of available gender data.

The rest of the article is organized as follows: First, we provide an overview of the information collection and analysis in UN PKOs. Next, we discuss the SAGE and CPAS systems. In this discussion we highlight the political nature of data construction and how inattention to gender reveals UN PKO leadership's priorities. Third, we demonstrate that the current approach neglects the gendered dimensions of peacekeeping and as a result has negative consequences for both local beneficiaries and PKOs. We conclude by proposing changes to improve UN PKOs' data collection and analysis.

UN peacekeeping data collection and analysis

For decades, the UN and member states were reluctant to engage in information gathering and analysis that could have been construed as intelligence work. The desire to be transparent and refrain from collecting information without express consent of member states impeded the establishment of a UN intelligence capacity (Chesterman 2006; Dorn and Bell 1995).

In reflecting on two major peacekeeping failures in the 1990s – the 1994 Rwandan genocide and the 1995 Srebrenica massacre – UN military officials cited a lack of credible and reliable intelligence (Duursma 2017, 826–827). Partly in response to these events, the Brahimi Report in 2000 called for 'field intelligence and other capabilities' and proposed establishing an 'Information and Strategic Analysis Secretariat' to improve UN PKOs (UN 2000). Member states, however, objected to the new secretariat, referring to it as the CIA of the UN (Chesterman 2006, 154). Notwithstanding the continued resistance from many UN member states, these developments contributed to an emerging consensus in the early 2000s that the UN should collect and analyze information on the tactical and operational levels to improve PKOs' ability to respond to threats (Duursma 2017).

In 2006, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UN DPKO, nowadays UN DPO), issued a policy directive to establish Joint Mission Analysis Centres (JMAC) and Joint Operations Centres (JOC) in all PKOs to ensure that 'all peacekeeping missions have in place integrated operations monitoring, reporting and information analysis hubs at Mission headquarters to support the more effective integration of mission-wide situational awareness, security information and analysis for management decision-making' (UN DPKO 2006: Section A). Simply put, the DPKO established JMAC and JOC to provide intelligence for PKO leadership.

JOCs receive and integrate reports from all sections of a mission to produce daily and weekly situation reports. JOC manages SAGE databases and access to the system. For example, after the data input for an incident, JOC can approve it, after which it becomes publicly available in the system. JOC also manages who has access to the SAGE system and trains personnel to use it. They also send 'flash' incident reports about urgent events, organize crisis management meetings, liaise with mission sections, collaborate with JMAC, maintain flow of information between mission components, and facilitate exchanges between mission leadership and headquarters. Overall, JOC's primary responsibilities are planning and reporting. JMAC does the analysis.

JMACs are multidisciplinary, analytical units composed of experts from the different PKO components – political, security, humanitarian, human rights, rule of law, and

development – tasked with producing operational and tactical intelligence (Shetler-Jones 2008; Duursma 2017). JMAC units primarily draw on overt human intelligence based on peacekeeper observations from patrols, community liaison assistants, and other contacts in civil society and conflict parties (Duursma 2017). Although experts from all components contribute to JMAC, mission personnel often perceive JMAC as prioritizing security-related aspects (Shetler-Jones 2008).

JOCs and JMACs work closely with SAGE, a web-based network of multiple databases that records and visualizes conflict incidents using GIS (geographic information system) technology. It is designed to improve missions' *situational awareness* by capturing outbreaks of violence and details about armed actors. First launched by the UN Secretariat in 2014, several UN peacekeeping missions, including MONUSCO and UNFICYP, have adopted SAGE as their primary situational awareness tool.

JMAC analyses inform mission assessments and planning in CPAS. CPAS is an integrated performance assessment tool designed to consolidate data on conflict contexts, assess mission output and outcomes, and produce recommendations. By design, CPAS is highly iterative to foster a constant cycle of data collection, analysis, and adjustment. As such, indicators and measured outputs change on a regular basis. CPAS allows mission personnel to select strategic objectives, design operational plans, record mission activities, assess outputs and impacts, and adjust mission planning accordingly (see Figure 1 for an illustration of the CPAS cycle). Its integrated whole-of-mission and results-oriented approach distinguishes CPAS from earlier input-focused UN evaluation systems.

The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) first launched CPAS in August 2018. All other UN missions were scheduled to adopt it by the end of 2021, but as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, system roll-out

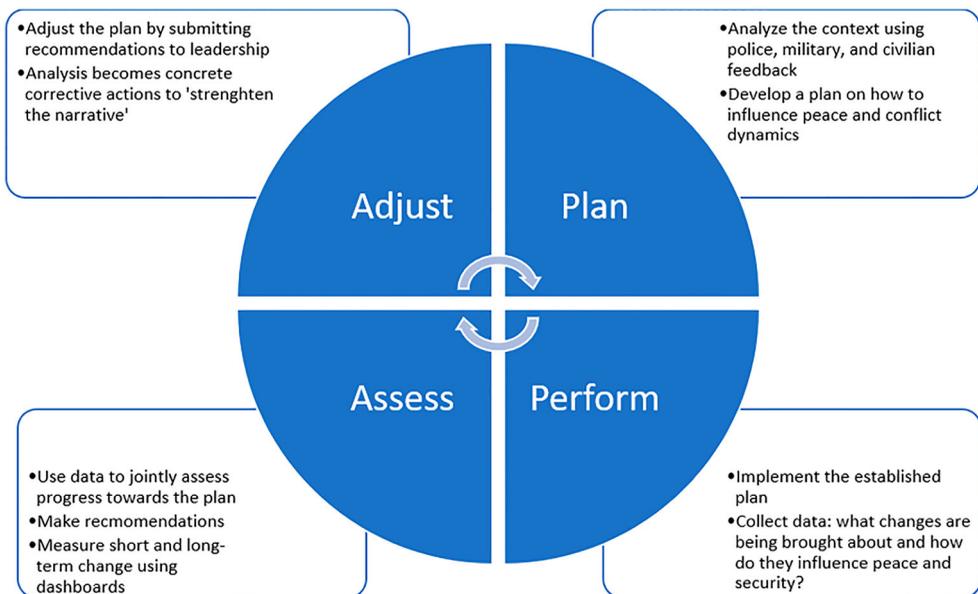


Figure 1. CPAS cycle (Taylor 2020).

has been delayed indefinitely for four UN missions.² Missions are adopting SAGE and CPAS systems as the UN implements its Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) Initiative, launched in 2018. Among the initiative's eight target areas are the goals of strengthening protection provided by peacekeeping; improving the safety and security of peacekeepers; and supporting effective performance and accountability by all peacekeeping components (UN DPO 2018). Researchers and practitioners alike have noted the potential for SAGE and CPAS to advance these and other goals by means of rigorous data collection, dissemination, and analysis. However, mission personnel had concerns about data siloing resulting from a lack of accessibility to both CPAS and SAGE, a lack of trust or buy-in from different mission sectors, and the continued fractionalization and duplication of data collection, recording, and analysis efforts (UN PK #1, 2021). Importantly, missions so far do not systematically integrate gender in their design of the platforms, with negative consequences for data collection, reporting, analysis, and planning.

The UN has several alternate decentralized methods of data collection as well. For example, UN Human Rights officers separately enter human rights violations into an Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights database, while Civil Affairs staff in New York stores situation reports from peace operations in the Civil Affairs Activity Database (Duursma 2021). JMAC staff, however, stores data in I2 Analyst, a visual analysis tool used for social network and geospatial analysis and visualization. These databases all constitute supplemental systems to SAGE, and the information they hold are not centralized, further limiting comprehensive analysis by mission personnel.

SAGE: Functions and potential

The UN deployed SAGE in 2014 to replace prior incident tracking management systems in a standardized, DPO-wide web-based platform. SAGE is not uniform and mission personnel play a crucial role in designing the data input forms, thereby guiding what information mission personnel collect and what JMAC can analyze (UN PK #1, 2021). The top priority is tracking violent incidents – including the type of event, the number of victims, and the number, affiliation, and ethnicity of perpetrators. Additionally, missions can record other critical conflict variables in SAGE, such as troop movements, hijackings, abductions, or protests (Duursma and Karlsrud 2019). Data are recorded in a structured data format, as opposed to free text, allowing for easier and faster information absorption and analysis. SAGE's data visualization capabilities may help personnel identify geographic or temporal trends in conflict events. The system offers missions the possibility to design specialized forms – incident report forms, activity forms, human rights reports, and early warning alert forms – for personnel to record and share relevant data. As a JOC officer emphasized 'SAGE can give you what you want. The design of the questions is key' (UN PK #1, 2021).

UN personnel and external analysts alike have been optimistic about the potential for SAGE to improve peacekeeping performance along several dimensions. SAGE has been touted as a promising tool in the fight against the recruitment and deployment of child soldiers. By streamlining data collection and sharing and facilitating trend analysis, SAGE may allow UN peacekeepers to consolidate information more easily about child soldiers, including their numbers, age, and gender distribution, and recruiting organizations (Laurence 2020).

Anecdotal reports from UN personnel attest to SAGE's utility. A civilian official with the UN Mission in South Sudan reported that initial trials with SAGE produced hotspot mapping similar to what the mission's JMAC had produced, but in a much shorter time frame (Spink 2018). It reportedly filled debilitating gaps present in MONUSCO's former ITEM system, namely, by ranking data credibility and threat severity, and assigning responsibility for entering, validating, and approving data in the system (Spink 2018, 31). In some cases, SAGE replaced data management 'systems' that involved emailing Microsoft Word and Excel files back and forth (Dorn 2016). Thus, SAGE may eliminate security risks associated with former ad hoc systems and conserve resources by preventing the duplication of data management efforts.

Allard Duursma and John Karlsrud contend that the application of machine learning to SAGE's structured data could boost mission's predictive capacities, facilitating preventive deployments to protect civilians and mission staff (2019). In interviews JOC personnel, however, cautioned that SAGE is not an artificial intelligence decision-support system and that users continue to play a crucial role in extracting information from the system (UN PK #1, 2021). SAGE may be less useful as a predictive tool for 'traditional' peacekeeping missions, as in Cyprus or the Western Sahara, where 'frozen' conflicts make event data scarce. In any case, no matter the accuracy of predictive data, gains will be felt only if missions decide to respond concretely to threats. A lack of concrete interventions despite improved intelligence may result in great loss of confidence in the UN – already saddled with a reputation for impotence – amongst local communities and host countries (Duursma and Karlsrud 2019).

SAGE may also be an effective tool for the protection of women and girls who are most regularly, though not exclusively, impacted by sexual violence. A report on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) conducted by the Center for Civilians in Conflict concludes that SAGE 'can contribute to the gender sensitivity of analysis if there is strong mission buy-in for the database, it is widely used, and data-entry forms are tailored to include gender' (Spink 2020, 24). However, missions do not systematically consider all gendered dimensions of conflict and violence. This point is expanded upon below.

CPAS: Functions and potential

CPAS was developed in response to a 2018 Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations report requesting an integrated performance policy framework (International Peace Institute [IPI] 2020).³ In 2018, the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) piloted the system and subsequently the UN missions in South Sudan, Lebanon, Cyprus, the DRC, Mali, Kosovo, and the Western Sahara adopted it (Haeri 2020; IPI 2020). CPAS centres around outputs, outcomes, and impact (IPI 2020). UN personnel expressed that this was one of the system's most important contributions, with the potential to change not only formal assessment methodology, but also shifting personnel's mindset from task completion to outcomes (UN PK #2, 2020).

According to DPO officials, CPAS's flexible nature has helped missions to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic (Taylor 2020). For example, in Lebanon, the UN mission relied on CPAS to develop a coordinated civilian–military plan to support local authorities in responding to and preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus (Lacroix 2020).

An official with the UN mission in the Central African Republic reported that CPAS has the potential to greatly improve gender analysis within the mission. Prior to its development, gender mainstreaming reportedly consisted of adding the word ‘gender’ or ‘women’ to existing strategies (Spink 2018). Another anticipated benefit of the CPAS system is its capacity to boost accountability and enhance performance through rigorous analysis of progress on key mandate priorities. This approach could reveal shortcomings in the UN’s inclusive and gender-sensitive community engagement policies or better track instances of peacekeeper-perpetrated sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), potentially incentivizing better behaviour (Donais and Murray 2021).

The heads of all four missions piloting CPAS in 2019 confirmed that the system was useful in implementing their mandates (UN General Assembly 2020). CPAS reportedly helped missions to: better define results frameworks, improve performance analysis products, inform decision-making at the strategic and operational levels, reprioritize tasks, boost accountability, prepare reports and briefings for the Security Council, and translate mission mandates into strategic plans. However, CPAS’s utility was dependent upon its acceptance and use by senior management, requiring DPO administrators to promote its use.

Operational weaknesses of SAGE and CPAS

Notwithstanding SAGE’s and CPAS’s potential to boost peacekeeping performance, there are limitations and risks.

Risks of data-based peacekeeping

Data-driven peacekeeping assessments are susceptible to data bias. Duursma’s study of UNAMID showed that the mission was more likely to collect information on violence occurring close to its bases (2017). Under-reporting is a particular concern when societal pressure and distrust in authorities prevent survivors from reporting as is often the case for sexual and gender-based violence.

Insufficient data literacy, risks related to data privacy and confidentiality, and sensitivities related to data gathering and reporting are other challenges that data-based systems such as SAGE and CPAS must contend with (Laurence 2019). Data illiteracy has presented substantial barriers. A lack of technical capacity amongst UN peacekeepers is a barrier to full adoption and use of these systems (Martin-Brûlé 2020). For example, mission components generate large amounts of data that do not ‘fit into’ SAGE, forcing them to resort to alternative data management systems (Expert Panel on Technology and Innovation in UN Peacekeeping 2014; Salama 2020). Proper training on how to use the databases is necessary to encourage mission-wide uptake and to maximize utility (Salama 2020). The failure to adequately train staff on the importance of proper data storage and management resulted in a failed attempt to launch SAGE at the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) (Spink 2018).

More fundamentally, the status and position of those collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data, and those being ‘captured’ as data make data construction a political process with limited space for independent critical knowledge (Mac Ginty 2017; Bliese-mann de Guevara and Kostić 2017). Inattention to the gendered dimensions of these

processes reveals the priorities of UN PKO leaders and what they consider good evidence. When asked about performance evaluations and potential indicators for operational effectiveness, MONUSCO leadership pointed to easily quantifiable data such as flight hours (UN PK #15, 2020). Another senior MONUSCO member explained that results-based budgeting is one of the key drivers of relying on quantitative data (UN PK #1, 2021). Following increased international attention to conflict-related sexual violence over the last two decades, incidents of conflict-related sexual violence are nowadays deemed important data points. However, inattention to the gendered nature of PKOs themselves and their interactions with local beneficiaries demonstrates a limited scope. PKOs consider gender data only important as it relates to those in need of protection from conflict-related sexual violence, ignoring other forms of gendered violence, the potential vulnerability of men (Carpenter 2003), and the gendered impacts of peacekeepers. This has significant implications for the effectiveness of missions and their security outcomes.

Inaccessibility of and resistance to SAGE and CPAS

Issues linked to mission uptake and internal resistance also inhibit implementation and lead to inaccuracies. A UNFICYP member emphasized internal resistance to the system as its influence grows. As she said, ‘The biggest impact CPAS had this year is that it was added to the SRSGs report, but there has been “extreme resistance” to its inclusion (UN PK #6, 2021). A UNIFIL information officer seemed to share this sentiment, noting that ‘external factors determine UNIFIL’s success as well’, especially the cooperation of outside parties (UN PK #3, 2021). What he saw as ‘fear of sharing information’ has also impeded effective implementation.

Although SAGE, for example, is meant to replace former fractionalized data management systems, distrust of the platform, especially amongst military and police components, has prevented systematic uptake in several missions (Expert Panel on Technology and Innovation in UN Peacekeeping 2014). Instead, individual units such as the U2 (a UN intelligence branch), police, JMAC, JOC, and human rights divisions maintain their own unofficial databases (Martin-Brûlé 2020). These units tend to keep their data internal to their component or section (Expert Panel on Technology and Innovation in UN Peacekeeping 2014). The refusal to invest in SAGE and CPAS and continued reliance on alternative systems was observed both in UNMISS and MINUSCA, despite mission leadership’s attempts to train personnel in their use (Spink 2020). Similarly, UNIFIL personnel stated in an interview that the mission will not transition to SAGE from its current system that they have refined and ‘personalized’ to the mission’s context because they perceive SAGE as inferior (UN PK #3, 2021).

A lack of trust and competition between mission components has also incentivized the perpetuation of these unofficial channels, which breaks down institutional memory as personnel rotate out and results in a duplication of efforts (and, hence, a squandering of resources). Resistance to using SAGE has also caused delays and data gaps. Monthly compliance reports for UNMISS showed 54 percent of incidents in July and August 2019 were not reported in SAGE, and other errors were common. Delays ranged from 1 to 18 days, though procedures dictate that data should be input within 24 h, and 567 duplicate entries were identified (Internal Audit Division 2019).

Exclusion of local communities

How UN PKOs design SAGE and CPAS limits opportunities for local community input. Local residents are intended to be the primary beneficiaries of peacekeeping interventions; however, mission leadership selects strategic indicators in line with its mandate to evaluate missions' performance (IPI 2020). Local beneficiaries have no channels to systematically inform CPAS and how mission leadership assesses mission effectiveness. Local insights are key to uncovering conflict dynamics. Additionally, local beneficiaries' cooperation and buy-in can be a significant boon for missions: communities are sources of intelligence, foundations for early alert networks, sites of radicalization or deradicalization, and, of course, the primary subjects of UN protection. Women play an important role in this regard; a MONUSCO community liaison assistant estimated that in his area 70 percent of security alerts came from women (UN PK #14, 2020). Even more importantly, missions should serve local interests and priorities as a matter of principle. Performance indicators chosen from the top-down cannot accurately assess the degree to which missions are addressing local conflict dynamics, protecting civilians, or assuaging gendered insecurities.

Gender invisibility

In addition to the operational weaknesses of these systems, missions so far fail to systematically mainstream gender into SAGE and CPAS. Whether mission personnel are required, or even able to, input data related to the gender demographics of conflict actors, mission personnel, and local beneficiaries depends on how mission leadership and JOC personnel design the system. Consequently, missions vary substantially. It also means gender advisors' participation in the design phase is critical. The MONUSCO SAGE Standard Operation Procedure, for example, requires personnel to report the gender of impacted beneficiaries in its *Incident Report* form and *Gender Affairs* forms. It also includes a space to record the gender of locals impacted by security incidents, but not for the gender of the peacekeepers responding to or reporting the incident (MONUSCO Joint Operations Centre 2020). This is significant due to the widely-held belief reflected in UN publications and the statements of mission personnel that 'it's easier to get sympathy from the local community when women are there, and it's easier to communicate with women in society' (UN PK #12, 2021). The data required to substantiate this claim, however, is largely not collected. In contrast, in UNIFIL, which has not transitioned to SAGE, all patrols are required to report their gendered composition (UN PK #3, 2021; UN PK #4, 2020). One potential reason for this difference: UNIFIL's senior gender advisor was part of the design and implementation phase of the incident management system and CPAS ensuring the integration of a gender lens throughout the systems (UN PK #3, 2021).

Inattention to the gendered dimensions of data collection and analysis has four implications. First, UN PKO data, situational awareness, and intelligence are fundamentally flawed. This puts mission personnel and local populations at greater risk in direct contravention of A4P objectives. Second, gender invisibility in data collection and analysis limits mission awareness of their impacts on different segments of local populations, preventing evaluations from identifying inefficiencies in mission activities. Likewise, missions will not

be able to systematically interrogate the impacts of uniformed men and women, even though the UN has directed considerable attention towards the alleged benefits of women peacekeepers. Fourth, failing to systematically gather gendered data prevents missions from developing a ‘baseline’ knowledge of women and men’s differential experiences and impacts in conflict environments. The absence of a baseline, in turn, impedes the assessment of improvements on gender inequality.

Róisín Read found that the UN mission in Darfur (UNAMID) did not systematically document instances of sexual violence, nor did it track the impact of the conflict on women (2019: 476). When she inquired about this gap to mission personnel, they claimed ‘more comprehensive data’ existed in the Human Rights section but that it was not shared due to confidentiality. Documenting sexual violence, then, constitutes ‘a political refusal of this silence’ (Read 2019). The paucity of gender-sensitive data has adversely impacted the Women, Peace and Security agenda in that the UN cannot measure the scope of the problem, resulting in policies that fail to serve all beneficiaries. To prevent and prosecute sexual violence, which disproportionately affects women, girls, and sexual and gender minorities, all its forms including sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers must be recorded and addressed (Anania, Mendes, and Nagel 2020). Evidence from MONUSCO shows that requiring data fields on gender in CPAS and SAGE *can* mitigate many of these issues (Spink 2020).

Incomplete PKO data

Studies show analyzing operations for gendered effects is necessary to shield women and men from unintentional harm and to assure they benefit equally from mission operations. For example, gender analysis of KFOR operations, the NATO peacekeeping force in Kosovo, revealed that roadblocks set up by the mission interrupted food and supply delivery to women disproportionately, as men had established alternative resupply routes. NATO forces in Afghanistan made a similar discovery and consequently used lighter vehicles for an operation to avoid damaging roads upon which women and children relied far more than men (Hammar and Berg 2015).

SAGE has the potential to improve gender-sensitive data tracking and evaluation. In MONUSCO, leadership consulted Protection of Civilian (PoC) advisors, Human Rights Officers, and Women Protection Advisors separately (Spink 2020). This ensured gender is a required category for data entry forms on incidents, which has transformed data collection from a passive to an active process in which peacekeepers seek out information on gender dynamics. However, in MONUSCO the collection of this information is limited to victims/survivors of violence and does not include peacekeepers. This reflects and entrenches the assumption of UN PKOs as ‘gender-less’ organizations and therefore paints an incomplete picture.

Gendered data goes beyond the identity of victims/survivors. It includes information on who is performing what activities, how they perform activities and to what effect, who is benefiting and who is excluded from mission activities, or who is perpetrating and who is experiencing violence and marginalization in the conflict environment. Each of these is an important determinant of local satisfaction and mission legitimacy and effectiveness. They may also be predictors of violence. As such, their absence from intelligence frameworks puts peacekeeping personnel and local beneficiaries at risk.

One peacekeeper with MONUSCO reported the mission's lack of statistical data on communities in Kivu impaired their ability to perform their job effectively. This data could 'help us in planning our activities and engaging with the community in a very effective manner' (UN PK #5, 2021). A Gender Affairs Officer with UNFICYP reiterated the need for improved data, specifically, gender-disaggregated data. Other missions, she argued, had greater success along gendered metrics, such as contending with CRSV or protection of civilians, because of their access to appropriate data (UN PK #6, 2021). The absence of gender-disaggregated data thus limits missions' preventive and protection capacities, as well as accurate analysis of beneficiary power dynamics and access to resources (Mazurana, Benelli, and Walker 2013). The UN's Global Study on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325, for example, found that the key to anticipating and preventing violent extremism lies in careful analysis of cross-cutting gender indicators.

The absence of gendered data can endanger women. The gender data gap, a global phenomenon whereby information on a wide variety of subjects is gathered primarily on men, has proven to have harmful consequences. For example, women are 17 percent more likely to die in a car crash because tests use 'male' dummies as the default (Criado-Perez 2019). The costs of gender insensitivity only become greater in conflict contexts. For example, when peacekeeping patrols in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in Darfur were conducted exclusively by male peacekeepers, they were unable to gather meaningful intelligence from women IDPs, who were reluctant to speak with male soldiers. This meant that the mission was ignorant of the sexual violence and sexual harassment that these women were experiencing, and were therefore unable to address it until uniformed women were deployed to consult with female beneficiaries (Hammar and Berg 2015). Similarly, one Gender Affairs Officer with MONUSCO found that women peacekeepers' dialogues with local women in the DRC introduced new information that strengthened the mission's PoC strategy in Goma (UN PK #7, 2020).

Incomplete data on conflict dynamics can also put mission personnel at risk. A 2017 analysis of UN peacekeeper casualties found that the UN's intelligence deficit made peacekeepers less secure. This deficit was caused not by technology, but by a failure to achieve 'the basics, especially human intelligence, networks of informants, situational awareness, and capacity to communicate with the population' (UN DPO 2017, 6). This resulted in a lack of tactical intelligence upon which to base military and police operations. Data lacking attention to gender and disproportionately neglecting the knowledge and input of women contribute to these intelligence shortcomings and their consequent tactical failures.

Missions are ignorant of their impacts on the population

Gender invisibility in data collection and analysis limits personnel's awareness of (1) their impacts on, and (2) the needs of different segments of local populations. In turn, this makes it harder for performance evaluations to identify inefficiencies in mission activities.

A civil society representative based in South Kivu, DRC, lamented that the UN mission understood neither its impact on the ground nor the root causes of conflict in the region. According to the interviewee, this was because of the unrepresentative, elite, *male* sources with which the mission primarily engages, for example, a community's 'big

man' (CSO representative #1, 2020). This bias provided only a narrow picture of how the mission was performing; its impacts on more vulnerable segments of the population – including less powerful men and women in particular – cannot be ascertained without more democratic engagement and intelligence gathering.

Without an understanding of how conflict dynamics and mission activities affect women and other under-served groups, identifying points of weakness and adjusting responses becomes difficult. Though several interviewees reported that their mission had improved the safety and wellbeing of local women, these claims were rarely based on analysis or concrete experiences. Rather, they alluded to 'happy' women and locals, who were 'content' with or 'participated' in mission programming. One soldier in Lebanon expressed that he thought engaging with women in the community was 'just' to garner local support for the mission and reduce hostility. He did not think of better service to women through regular consultation as a strategic goal unto itself (UN PK #8, 2021).

Too often, gendered data are seen as relevant only insofar as it relates to women. UNFICYP, for example, records beneficiary gender for civilian components' work boosting women's participation in peace processes or capacity building (UN PK #6, 2021). However, it is critical to recognize that gender is relevant to all mandated tasks and conflict dynamics. Without a holistic understanding of how missions impact men and women, evaluating effectiveness of different activities and approaches will always be incomplete and biased.

Missions don't understand men and women's impact

In recent years the UN has invested heavily in public relations campaigns touting the benefits of gender-diversity within peacekeeping. More women peacekeepers, the UN claims, makes peacekeeping more effective. Despite the considerable attention paid towards uniformed women, the gender data gap means that missions cannot systematically evaluate the extent to which these claims are true. Even if missions collect information on the gender composition of patrols, like UNIFIL does (UN PK #3, 2021; UN PK #9, 2021), so far they have not analyzed the data to understand patrol composition influences for example information gathering. Other missions like MONUSCO do not even report the gender composition of patrols in SAGE. In other words, they cannot systematically assess the impact that women peacekeepers have, if any, on mission outcomes.

Research and advocacy relating to women's role in peacekeeping often lacks this type of statistical data. Instead it is mainly based on anecdotal evidence about women's ability to 'inspire' local communities as role models (Olsson 2009; Pruitt 2016), defuse violent situations (Anderholt 2012; Mazurana 2003), deter sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated by uniformed men (Karim and Beardsley 2016), garner local legitimacy or support (Karim 2019), or consult more effectively with local communities (Hammar and Berg 2015). In interviews, men and women in uniform attested to women's importance. Most often, this was due to uniformed women's ability to 'unlock' previously inaccessible segments of local communities. Women soldiers were often recognized as bringing a new and valuable perspective to planning (UN PK #10, 2021). Other interviewees cited local women's positive attitudes towards women peacekeepers as a substantive gain.

Whereas Lebanese women rarely engaged with male patrols, female patrols drew women out of their houses to take pictures with women peacekeepers (UN PK #11, 2020). Many peacekeepers provided anecdotes like these as evidence for the positive impact of gender-diverse teams.

MONUSCO and UNFICYP do not record the composition of police and troop patrols in SAGE. Though the UNFICYP Gender Affairs team recognized that this was a shortcoming, integrating gender into its activity records was not a priority concern, as ‘the utility of such data is not clear’ given the ‘particularities’ of the UNFICYP mandate (UN PK #6, 2021). Presumably, given that UNFICYP’s mandate revolves around maintaining the status quo and restoring law and order, unlike multidimensional missions which are often mandated to protect civilians, personnel deem ‘gender’ irrelevant. Limited resources contributed to the marginalization of gender analysis; only duties dealing explicitly with gender, such as UNPOL training on gender bias and gender-based violence, received institutional support.

Piecemeal approaches to gender analysis within missions limit awareness of how effective personnel are, and misunderstand the cross-cutting nature of gender. Systematic data collection and analysis of the roles that women and men play in *all* mission operations, including those that appear to be independent of gender, is necessary to draw conclusions about the value of gender diversity, including the benefits of a gender-inclusive peacekeeping force and the shortcomings of an all-men one.

Interviewed personnel had sometimes developed working theories about where uniformed women performed best, like one Lieutenant Colonel with UNIFIL who believed female peacekeepers were ‘more effective’ on community patrols than at the Blue Line (UN PK #12, 2021). However, practices are not evidence-based. Rather, they are often based on stereotypical notions of femininity, as uniformed women are seen as more empathetic or patient communicators. In addition to reinforcing gender essentialisms, the fact that these practices have not been subject to data-based scrutiny hints at potential inefficiency. For example, if women are sent to consult with local beneficiaries without proper training because it is assumed they are inherently better communicators, it is possible that they will not perform well. This phenomenon is referred to as the ‘double burden,’ in which uniformed women are expected to perform better than their male counterparts with no support (Wilén 2020), as opposed to PKOs investing in equitable training to improve the communication skills of all peacekeepers.

The lack of gender-disaggregated data inhibits analysis of men peacekeepers too. PKOs do not systematically scrutinize men’s behaviour and their interactions with beneficiaries. Although men peacekeepers have engaged in sexual exploitation and abuse in all peacekeeping missions since it was first reported in Cambodia in 1993 (Westendorf 2020), the UN DPO has no explicit policy on how mission leadership should integrate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse into CPAS. UN efforts to collect and analyze data on sexual exploitation and abuse are insufficient, problematic, and often delayed (for a more detailed discussion see Grady 2016), which presents another institutional obstacle to using the data for assessing performance through CPAS. Men’s negative impact on PKOs does not always manifest in sexual exploitation and abuse. It often takes less extreme forms that are nonetheless gendered and racialized (Henry 2012, 2015). In line with work showing that some peacekeepers construe themselves as superior outsiders

rescuing feminized locals (Jennings 2015, 2019), one interviewee who had served in the mission in the Central African Republic said about the locals that ‘most people are not as developed’ (UN PK #13, 2021). Beneficiaries recognize and understand men peacekeepers’ hostility as a civil society activist in the DRC said: ‘The local men are considered weak by the military man peacekeepers’ (CSO representative #2, 2020). PKOs do not systematically collect data to capture these negative interactions of men peacekeepers that are rooted in institutionalized culture of militarized masculinity. The lack of data combined with a lack of gendered analysis results in blind spots regarding the negative impacts of toxic forms of masculinity on operational effectiveness.

Rigorous analysis of the claims made by the UN and many peacekeeping personnel requires systematically recording the gender composition of personnel teams performing tasks, as well as the outcomes of those tasks. Under what circumstances do men and women perform best? Identifying the relative advantages of uniformed men and women, if any, can then inform planning to maximize positive impact.

A lack of baseline knowledge impairs progress assessments

Failing to systematically gather gendered data prevents missions from developing baseline knowledge. The lack of baseline knowledge impedes performance assessment and improvement efforts, which results in continued inefficiencies, security risks, and shortcomings in performing mandated tasks and addressing the needs of local beneficiaries.

Baseline assessments are critical for assessing the impact of any intervention. The UN measures progress on women’s participation in peacekeeping based on baseline data from 2006, when DPO began disaggregating data on military peacekeepers by gender. MONUSCO’s Gender Affairs team relies on baseline assessments recording how many mission sections employ gender indicators and gender analysis to measure the mission’s level of gender-responsiveness (UN PK #4, 2020). However, the absence of broader gendered data prevents overarching gender analyses.

Regular, cross-cutting gender-disaggregated data could provide baseline measures for a number of key indicators of progress: (1) the extent to which the mission meets local women and men’s needs; (2) local men and women’s level of engagement and satisfaction with the mission; (3) where and how male and female personnel are deployed; (4) how uniformed men and women are performing on various tasks; (5) uniformed men and women’s satisfaction levels with the mission; and (6) which tasks the mission has struggled to perform successfully.

Each of these indicators can inform evaluations of a mission’s effectiveness. Even for traditional operations without explicitly gendered mandates, knowing how the mission impacts men and women differently and how the mission’s own personnel perform differently across different tasks is necessary to make plans that maximize the effectiveness of personnel while mitigating negative impacts on local communities. Operational planning conducted without a thorough baseline assessment of gendered inputs and outcomes is ill-informed and therefore inefficient. For example, one female peacekeeper with MONUSCO cited a lack of statistical data as the biggest challenge to her work, as ‘I do not know what inefficiencies exist’ (UN PK #11, 2020). Furthermore, gender invisibility in data impedes identifying best practices based on demonstrated progress along gendered metrics.

How serious is the UN about gender mainstreaming?

UN PKOs' failure to adequately integrate gender into SAGE and CPAS indicates that the missions' 'gender mainstreaming' can be better characterized as 'gender sidestreaming', or 'the practice, deliberate or unintentional, of sidelining women and relegating them to specialised spaces in international peace and security while attempting gender mainstreaming or increased gender integration' (Newby and Sebag 2021, 149). Despite the UN DPO website hailing CPAS as 'encompassing cross-cutting themes like gender mainstreaming and protection of civilians', the shortcomings of the data systems imply that the UN fails to allocate sufficient resources to assess the relationship between peacekeeping missions and women (UN DPO 2020). UN DPO leadership's top-down approach paired with the lack of buy-in from mission personnel and lack of consultation of the local community continues to inhibit gender mainstreaming progress.

The variation across missions in how gender is integrated in SAGE and CPAS reveals that it is still effectively sidestreamed in UN PKOs. The MONUSCO SAGE Standard Operation Procedure, for example, shows that SAGE's gender inputs are relegated to recording the gender of civilians and instances of conflict-related sexual violence. This reflects a larger issue of thinking of gender narrowly as a PoC issue related to conflict-related sexual violence, while ignoring how the gendered dynamics of mission personnel's interactions with beneficiaries impact the fulfilment of the mission mandate. It also reflects the politics of data collection, in that the only instances of sexual violence or misconduct recorded are those carried out by combatants and only come from those willing to report their experiences. To ensure comprehensive collection of data on sexual violence, it is crucial for missions to include senior gender advisors in strategic decisions and processes. For example, UNIFIL's senior gender advisor's participation in developing and implementing CPAS was critical to its gender mainstreaming. In contrast, the senior gender advisor position in MONUSCO has been vacant for years. This hampered gender mainstreaming efforts during the mission's introduction of CPAS (UN PK #1, 2021). These shortcomings highlight that gender mainstreaming must be a priority undertaken from the beginning and reflected in the hiring and consultation of mission personnel.

Despite the inconsistencies in gender mainstreaming efforts across missions, SAGE and CPAS rely entirely on mission personnel's discretion to evaluate desired impacts and effectiveness. While CPAS is intended to enhance successful mandate implementation and 'map local dynamics' to do so, no official channels exist through which the local community can contribute to the working definition of effectiveness (United Nations Department of Peace Operations 2020). This oversight underscores the top-down approach of UN PKOs, where the mechanisms designed to better serve local communities have no strategy to gather their input.

Opportunities and recommendations going forward

SAGE and CPAS present promising opportunities for gender mainstreaming across missions but require systematic improvements to do so. We suggest four changes to improve data collection and analysis through SAGE and CPAS, including improving internal access to data, establishing mechanisms for input from the host community,

collecting gender-disaggregated data systematically, and undertaking systematic analysis of existing gender data. These reforms would allow for more effective collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data that would in turn improve UN PKO's gender mainstreaming efforts and mandate fulfilment.

Increased access to SAGE and CPAS to relevant mission personnel would improve mission uptake of the data systems. To address data siloing and internal resistance, units within UN PKOs, specifically U2, JMAC, and JOC, and outside, such as the Civil Affairs Activity Database and units linked to OCHCR in Geneva, should resist isolating data and share information with other staff members, including peacekeepers on the ground. This would in turn lessen resistance and increase use of the system, which will aid gender mainstreaming prospects.

UN PKOs must include the host community in evaluating indicators of effectiveness to fully include gender in data systems. Ideas on how to best serve the community will come from the community members themselves. Data systems' eventual predictive capacity will be limited by the indicators selected due to the lack of diversity in the perspectives of mission leadership. Regular dialogue with the community will not only reveal more accurate information and priorities but establish relationships that will aid the mission's operational effectiveness in the future. Eventual consultation with the community must have a gendered lens, as even when local opinions are considered, they often come from men in positions of relative power that do not reflect the range of experiences of others less powerful.

The systematic collection of gender-disaggregated data would present opportunities to collect more accurate information and better serve local communities. Current information about the supposedly superior ability of women peacekeepers to interact with local women is largely anecdotal (Olsson 2009; Pruitt 2016; Anderholt 2012; Mazurana 2003; Hammar and Berg 2015). Collecting and analyzing data, such as recording the gender composition of patrol teams in SAGE, would enable insights into gendered interactions with local beneficiaries and help to shape more effective patrolling and community engagement strategies. Standards for collecting data are needed for consistent analysis. The systematic collection will allow for the development of 'baselines' for beneficiaries and missions, which can enable more effective gender-sensitive strategies and their periodic evaluation.

In addition, UN PKOs should analyze available qualitative data from patrol reports, SAGE incident reports, databases run by OCHCR in Geneva and Civil Affairs in New York, and consultations with beneficiaries. These are untapped sources for gendered analysis of how women and men peacekeepers interact with beneficiaries and how men and women beneficiaries are differently impacted by peacekeeping missions. Findings could aid mission personnel in assessing priorities, resources, and deployment of women and men peacekeepers. This data could supplement eventual gender-disaggregated quantitative data collected to guide future policies.

Gender-sensitive data tracking is only a first step to better understanding and addressing the gendered dimensions of conflict. Even after gender has been integrated into SAGE and CPAS, data collection, and data analysis processes, progress is dependent on missions' willingness to act on this enhanced data. While capturing and analyzing gender-sensitive data is a necessary step in the process of relieving missions of gender-blindness and its associated risks, concrete progress will depend on sincere commitment to act on gender-sensitive knowledge from mission leadership.

Adding new gender-based reporting requirements may further burden already strained mission personnel. However, while we recommend more reporting, we also argue for greater intra-mission communication and cooperation to reduce duplicative efforts. Likewise, one of the most promising features of CPAS and SAGE is their ability to streamline data collection and consolidate information. As these systems grow, missions should be able to phase out former fractionalized systems which absorb additional resources. More importantly, understanding the gendered dimensions of conflict is not an optional luxury. It is central for missions to achieve their mandated goals, such as reduction of violence and protection of civilians. Though gender-mainstreaming data collection and analysis will at least initially require greater human and financial resources, it is an essential activity, and one which may reduce overall burden in the future as understandings of the conflict environment become more sophisticated and missions become more capable of effective prevention and response.

Notes

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2. These missions are: UNDOF in Syria/Israel, UNISFA in Abyei, UNMOGIP in India/Pakistan, and UNTSO in the Middle East (Taylor 2021).
3. UN General Assembly, Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, UN Doc. A/72/19, March 15, 2018. The request was welcomed by the Security Council. See: UN Security Council, Statement by the President of the Security Council, UN Doc. S/PRST/2018/10, May 14, 2018.

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Notes on contributors

Robert U. Nagel is a postdoctoral research fellow at Georgetown University's Institute for Women, Peace and Security working on the gendered dimensions of peace and conflict. He has published in

International Studies Quarterly, the Journal of Peace Research, and the Journal of Conflict Resolution, among other academic and policy-oriented platforms.

Kate Fin is a development professional with a focus on designing peacebuilding interventions in the Lake Chad Basin. A former research associate at the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security and the Institute for the Study of International Migration, her research interests lie at the intersection of conflict resolution, forced migration, and gender.

Julia Maenza is a senior at Georgetown University, and a research assistant at the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security.

ORCID

Robert U. Nagel  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1874-170X>

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