

# Evaluation of Women, Peace and Security in field based missions: Elections and Political Transitions

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## INSPECTION AND EVALUATION DIVISION

Function *“The Office shall evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of the programmes and legislative mandates of the Organization. It shall conduct programme evaluations with the purpose of establishing analytical and critical evaluations of the implementation of programmes and legislative mandates, examining whether changes therein require review of the methods of delivery, the continued relevance of administrative procedures and whether the activities correspond to the mandates as they may be reflected in the approved budgets and the medium-term plan of the Organization;”* ([General Assembly Resolution 48/218 B](#)).

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## Contents

Summary .....	3
I. Introduction and objective .....	5
II. Background .....	5
III. Evaluation Scope and Methodology .....	7
IV. Evaluation Results .....	8
V. Recommendations .....	21
Annex I: Management Response .....	24

## Summary

In its evaluation of Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in electoral processes and political transitions in field missions, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) focused on the three WPS pillars of participation, protection, and prevention, and five outcome areas ranging from mitigation of political violence against women, to improvements in public goods and services driven by women's leadership. It covered the three Peacekeeping Operations in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Mali, and the three Special Political Missions (SPMs) in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia.

Across all countries, structural and systemic factors hindered women's equal participation in public and political life, deterring them from turning out to vote, or running successful campaigns. Four challenges were common: a) social and cultural norms, b) security concerns, c) high levels of female poverty coupled with low literacy, and d) lack of political will to support women candidates.

Insecurity and political violence targeting women trended upwards or remained high in all countries. Peacekeeping operations with protection mandates made efforts to mainstream gender into their activities but fell short of addressing politically motivated physical and non-physical violence targeting women around elections. Existing conflict data was neither adequately nuanced nor systematically utilized to tailor security plans to the realities of violence on the ground. SPM activities were limited to monitoring violence (except in Iraq) in the absence of protection mandates.

Across all countries, voter turnout declined, and women faced specific challenges in exercising their voting rights. Lack of gender-responsive electoral security was exacerbated by the Missions' limited support to the election management bodies (EMBs), which limited the Missions' effectiveness in alleviating women's growing sense of insecurity and distrust in the electoral process.

Missions were most influential in advocating for and supporting consistent and enforceable implementation of gender quotas as the most effective temporary special measure to increase or maintain the share of women candidates and elected officials. Notable gains were made in Mali, Somalia, Iraq, and Afghanistan up until 2021. Missions' collaboration with civil society organizations was noteworthy in sustaining these gains in the longer-term.

In most instances, there was limited increase in the share of women appointed to ministerial positions. While maintaining impartiality, not all Missions targeted elected women officials in their programming, except in advocating for the appointment of women chairs to the EMBs, or to ongoing peace processes.

Finally, elected women were not particularly influential in improving the delivery of public goods and services. While limited available evidence showed that higher rates of women's political representation were positively correlated with spending more focused on education than military, elected women officials nevertheless faced significant challenges in garnering support for laws to advance gender equality, underlining the need for wider changes in the social, cultural and security spheres.

OIOS made three important recommendations to the six Missions to:

(a) Develop both long-term prevention and short-term protection measures to address political violence targeting women;

(b) Develop a Mission-specific strategy to promote women's political participation and representation grounded in the evidence-based analysis of the specific country context;

(c) Harmonize data strategy, advocacy, and support efforts with relevant United Nations Country Teams to further the WPS agenda.

OIOS also made one important recommendation to the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs to support and coordinate the contextualized WPS efforts of the Missions to enhance learning and enable knowledge exchange.

## I. Introduction and objective

1. The overall objective of this evaluation was to determine, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of Women, Peace and Security (WPS) outcomes achieved in electoral processes<sup>1</sup> and political transitions<sup>2</sup> across the three pillars of participation, protection, and prevention in select Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) and Special Political Missions (SPMs). The evaluation topic emerged from a programme-level risk assessment and a detailed scoping process described in the evaluation inception paper produced at the outset of the evaluation.<sup>3</sup>
2. The PKOs and SPMs selected were:
  - a) MINUSCA - United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (CAR)
  - b) MINUSMA - United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
  - c) MONUSCO - United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
  - d) UNAMA – United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan<sup>4</sup>
  - e) UNAMI - United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq
  - f) UNSOM - United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia.
3. Management comments were sought and incorporated in the annex.

## II. Background

4. The WPS Agenda refers to a normative framework based on a set of ten United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions<sup>5</sup> that emphasize the importance of gender equality to peace and security efforts. Beginning with the adoption of the UNSC Resolution 1325 in 2000, the principles proposed in the WPS resolutions guide United Nations policies and programmes in the translation of the emerging norms on the role of gender in peace and security into action. These principles were articulated into “pillars” of WPS activity: protection of women’s rights and bodies especially in conflict situations; participation of women in all forms of peace and security governance and decision-making; and women’s role in the *prevention* of conflict and violence, specifically but not limited to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and conflict resolution processes.<sup>6</sup> The WPS Agenda complements the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) by dismantling obstacles to substantive gender equality, including advancing the equal participation of women in public and private institutions.
5. Recently, the Secretary General’s (SG) Call to Action on Women Transforming Peace<sup>7</sup> and the Action for Peacekeeping Initiative have encouraged all peacekeeping partners to reinvigorate

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<sup>1</sup> Includes pre-election period, during elections, and post-election.

<sup>2</sup> Process that bridges a country’s return to constitutional order from authoritarian regimes toward democracy.

<sup>3</sup> Inception Paper Assignment No: IED-21-012.

<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding the dramatic changes experienced in Afghanistan effective August 2021, the analysis of UNAMA from 2017 to August 2021 is included.

<sup>5</sup> Encompassing S/RES/1325, S/RES/1820, S/RES/1888, S/RES/1889, S/RES/1960, S/RES/2103, S/RES/2122, S/RES/2242, S/RES/2467, and S/RES/2493.

<sup>6</sup> The fourth pillar on relief and recovery is not covered here.

<sup>7</sup> See [peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/dpo\\_call\\_to\\_action-final.pdf](https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/dpo_call_to_action-final.pdf).

the implementation of WPS commitments. This has led to an explicit focus on enhancing women’s leadership and full participation to transform peace and security by PKOs, coupled with an increasing number of Missions with explicit WPS mandates covering the participation pillar.

6. The Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) work in close cooperation with relevant United Nations partners, in the implementation of the WPS agenda, notably with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).<sup>8</sup> In Missions, Gender Advisers provide overall guidance on the implementation of the WPS agenda and together with Mission components, implement WPS activities.
7. The Under-Secretary General of DPPA serves as the General Assembly-mandated focal point for electoral assistance activities across the United Nations system. With the support of the Electoral Assistance Division (EAD), the focal point develops and disseminates the United Nations internal electoral policy, including the Policy to Promote Women’s Electoral and Political Participation.<sup>9</sup> Based on recommendations from needs assessments led by EAD, the focal point also sets the parameters for all United Nations electoral assistance, pursuant to the request of Member States. In field settings, electoral assistance is generally provided through components of the Missions. PKO military and police components support national law enforcement agencies in providing security for electoral processes. The SG mandated that all electoral assistance in PKO and SPM mission settings be delivered in a fully integrated manner and that all electoral components report to the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRS) or through the Deputy SRS who also serves as the Resident Coordinator (RC).<sup>10</sup>
8. In practice, all Missions in this evaluation, except for MONUSCO, had an electoral unit, which led electoral assistance activities, and coordinated the work of other agencies, notably the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women. UNDP focused on supporting electoral processes and logistical arrangements, while UN Women provided training and advice in enhancing women’s participation in electoral processes.
9. All Missions had explicit WPS participation priorities in their mandates, while PKOs had specific WPS protection mandates (see table 1). All Missions also had mandates to support elections except MONUSCO whose mandate did not include electoral support due to certain political considerations. The presidential and parliamentary elections covered in this evaluation are shown in the table.

Table 1. WPS and Elections Mandate References (2020)

Mandates	MINUSCA UNSCR 2552	MINUSMA UNSCR 2531	MONUSCO UNSCR 2556	UNAMA UNSCR 2543	UNAMI UNSCR 2522	UNSOM UNSCR 2540
WPS - Protection of women	X	X	X			
WPS - Women’s participation in political	X	X	X	X	X	X

<sup>8</sup> Other partners may include the Development Coordination Office (DCO), the Office of Counter Terrorism (OCT), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)..

<sup>9</sup> See [dppa.un.org/en/elections](http://dppa.un.org/en/elections).

<sup>10</sup> DPPA Policy, Principles and Types of UN Electoral Assistance, 2021.

Mandates	MINUSCA UNSCR 2552	MINUSMA UNSCR 2531	MONUSCO UNSCR 2556	UNAMA UNSCR 2543	UNAMI UNSCR 2522	UNSOM UNSCR 2540
processes and institutions						
Elections	X	X		X	X	X
	<b>CAR</b>	<b>Mali</b>	<b>DRC</b>	<b>Afghanistan</b>	<b>Iraq</b>	<b>Somalia</b>
Elections included in this evaluation (Pre = Presidential; Par= Parliamentary)	2020-21 Pre & Par	2018 Pre 2019-20 Par	2018 Pre 2019 Par	2018 Par 2019 Pre	2018 Par 2021 Par	2016 Par 2017 Pre 2021 Par- Pre (indirect <sup>11</sup> )

### III. Evaluation Scope and Methodology

10. Based on available data, the evaluation examined the quality and adequacy of the Mission inputs and outputs/activities and their contribution to observable changes in the outcomes presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Assessed outcomes

Pillar	Outcomes
Prevention and Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mitigation of political violence targeting women participating in elections</li> </ul>
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in women voter turnout</li> <li>Increase in women candidates elected/appointed at the national and subnational levels (<i>with a focus on implementation of constitutional and legislative guarantees for gender-equal electoral processes</i>)</li> <li>Increase in women appointments in government/executive branch</li> <li>Improvements in public goods and services due to quality of women leadership and influence (<i>with a focus on women-friendly policies and shifts in public spending and good governance</i>)</li> </ul>

11. To avoid overlap with the coverage of evaluations and audits the scope excluded: gender mainstreaming, gender parity, sexual exploitation and abuse, outcomes related to women's political participation in peace processes and political dialogues, as well as WPS activities at DPO and DPPA headquarters level.
12. This evaluation employed a case study methodology, analyzing the six Missions systematically. It covered the period between January 2017 to December 2021. The study used a mixed-method approach, triangulating diverse data sources using qualitative and quantitative methods (see Table 3).

<sup>11</sup> There is no universal suffrage in Somalia. Elections to both houses of the parliament are indirect with members elected by electoral colleges whose delegates are selected by traditional clan elders.



Table 3. **Methodology and Analytical Tools**

Pillar	Data sources	Methods and Analysis
<b>Prevention and Protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ACLED<sup>12</sup> geo-coded curated dataset on in political violence targeting women (PVTW)</li> <li>Mission data sets on gender-based violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trends and patterns on the level of PVTW in elections</li> </ul>
<b>Participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer reviewed research articles and UN documents</li> <li>Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) data</li> <li>WPS Index 2019/20</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Descriptive pattern analysis and expert review of women voter turnout and women representation</li> </ul>
<b>Mission effectiveness and contributions to WPS outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WPS activity matrix completed by Mission</li> <li>Country specific election data from CAR, Mali and Afghanistan</li> <li>The World Bank's World Development Indicators (WDI) and the World Bank's Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regression analysis of Mission WPS activities and women voter turnout in Mali and women candidacy rates in CAR</li> <li>Analysis of gender affinity in Afghanistan</li> <li>Scatterplots of women representation and national spending and perception of good governance</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key internal and external stakeholders encompassing staff of Missions, United Nations headquarters, partners, as well as government officials and civil society organizations (CSOs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structured content analysis using NVivo of 120 interviews (78 women and 42 men) and 200+ documents</li> </ul>

13. **Limitations:** Most Missions lacked gender-disaggregated location-specific WPS data relating to voter turnout, electoral violence, and individual candidates (such as incumbency status, party affiliation, and constituency represented). In addition, most Missions lacked a purposeful, context-specific strategy driving their WPS efforts, which made difficult to establish direct linkages between Mission activities and outcomes achieved at country level.

## IV. Evaluation Results

A. Structural and systemic factors created barriers to women's full and equal political participation across all six countries.

14. All six countries experienced medium- to high-intensity conflict and suffered from high rates of poverty and pervasive gender inequality (see Table 4).

Table 4. **Country statistics**<sup>13</sup>

	CAR	DRC	Mali	Somalia	Iraq	Afghanistan
<b>Population (millions)</b>	4.9	92.3	20.8	16.3	41.1	39.8
<b>% Women literacy</b>	24.4	62.9	18.9	NA	69	17
<b>% Urban population</b>	41.8	45	43.1	45.6	70.7	25.8

<sup>12</sup> The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data tracks PVTW which refers to the use of force targeting women and girls for a political purpose or motivation.

<sup>13</sup> Population data from [data.un.org](https://data.un.org) (2021); Literacy data from [unesco.org/countries/](https://unesco.org/countries/); GII data from [hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii](https://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii); HDI data from [https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2020\\_statistical\\_annex\\_table\\_1.pdf](https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2020_statistical_annex_table_1.pdf)

	CAR	DRC	Mali	Somalia	Iraq	Afghanistan
<b>Gender Inequality Index (GII) rank out of 189 countries</b>	159	150	158	NA	146	157
<b>Human Development Index (HDI) rank out of 189 countries</b>	188	175	184	NA	123	169

15. Across all countries, structural and systemic factors created barriers to women’s full and equal political participation, four of which were found to be common:

- a. Patriarchal social and cultural norms precluded women’s participation as candidates and voters. In this way, access to political and economic power was retained by elites and powerful men.
- b. Higher levels of poverty and illiteracy rates for women compared to men, with women lacking the necessary resources and skills to turnout to vote or run a successful political campaign.
- c. Security concerns, including PVTW, reduced women’s mobility while also creating personal distress for women and their families, potentially dissuading women from exercising their political rights.
- d. Finally, the lack of political will to shape the development of interventions to promote women’s political participation.

**B. In already volatile security environments, Missions’ efforts could not mitigate and fully address political violence targeting women.**

*B.1. Across all country cases, women voters, activists, candidates, and officials continued to face higher risks of political violence which reduced women’s mobility, undermined candidates’ credibility, and voters’ trust, dissuading them from fully participating in political processes and elections.*

16. Lack of adequate security affected all aspects of the electoral process, and women particularly faced several gender-related challenges linked to the idea that women do not belong in politics.

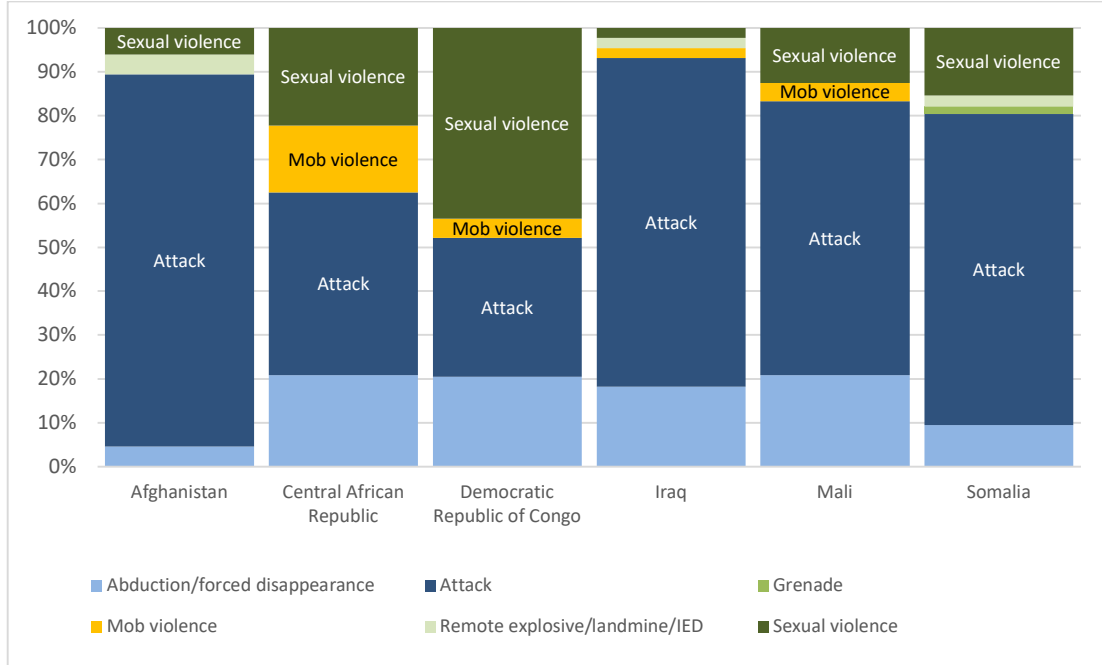
17. Political violence and PVTW<sup>14</sup> trended upwards or remained high in all countries, except for a slight downward trend in Somalia. PVTW increased in varying degrees in the lead up to the elections during 2017-2021 in all countries, except in Mali.

18. Types and targets of PVTW varied across the six countries (see Figures 1 and 2). Targeting of women through attacks was prevalent in all countries. Sexual violence was more prevalent, and significant in DRC, CAR and Mali. In Afghanistan and Somalia, remote violence tactics (e.g., use of grenades, remote explosives, landmines) were more common. Across all countries, unidentified armed groups were the most common perpetrators of PVTW. In Afghanistan, while both men and women cited insecurity as their main reason for not voting, women were significantly more likely to be deterred because of fear of violence from armed rebel groups.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The trends reviewed here covered ACLED tracked events of physical violence involving one to many victims.

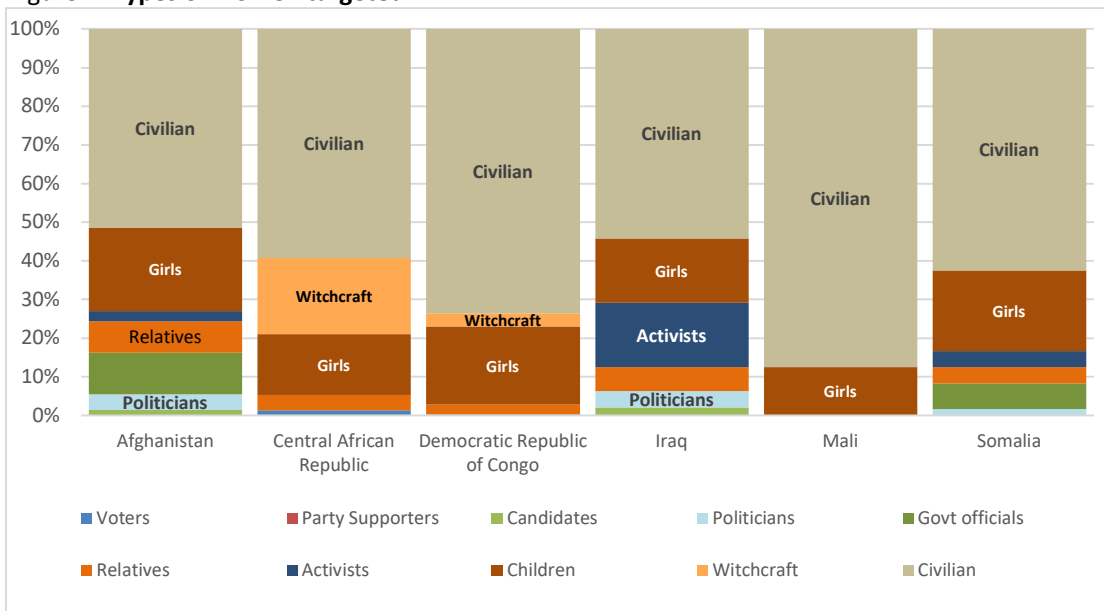
<sup>15</sup> Asia Foundation survey 2019.

**Figure 1. Type of PVTW targeting**



19. Across the countries, most of women targeted had no specific affiliations (categorized as “civilian”), and were from a wide swath of women, including aid workers, refugees/IDPs, journalists, students, health workers, prisoners, lawyers, women from ethnic or religious groups, etc., or were girls (see Figure 2). In CAR, and DRC to a lesser degree, women were targeted with accusations of witchcraft and sorcery and by vigilante type groups, often violent mobs. In Afghanistan and Iraq, women candidates, activists as well as women relatives of specific individuals were targeted disproportionately, coinciding with an increase in the numbers of women candidates in 2018 elections. Such trends in women’s political mobilization produced a backlash against not only those that aspired to political office, but also against women with no specific affiliation.

**Figure 2. Types of women targeted**



20. Overall, non-physical forms of violence against women also increased with equally negative ramifications for their participation in political processes. Most cited violations were intimidation, threats, attacks on women’s election posters, defamation, cyber bullying, disinformation campaigns, and harassment on social media.

*B.2. Despite attempts to mainstream gender into plans and activities, Missions (except for UNAMI) often inadequately accounted for the gendered aspects of violence in and around elections.*

21. To prevent and respond to security concerns, Missions employed various measures with varying degrees of effectiveness.

22. Peacekeeping operations with protection mandates endeavored to mainstream gender as an overarching principle into their early warning mechanisms and protection plans during elections. For example, MONUSCO identified election violence hotspots, and together with civil society actors, mobilized the local protection teams – a third of which was represented by women – to further sensitize the communities and address any conflict through peaceful dialogue. Similarly, MINUSMA provided trainings to national security officers on prevention of electoral violence and supplied election security pocket cards which featured vulnerable groups such as women. MINUSCA, in collaboration with UNDP and UN Women, monitored election violence against women through local women monitors in the lead up to elections in 2020 and 2021. These efforts, however, were not commensurate with the magnitude of the challenge at hand. In Mali, in the 2018 presidential elections, nearly 500 polling stations (two per cent of the total) were forced to close due to threats by extremist groups.<sup>16</sup> In CAR, close to 800 of the country’s polling stations, 14 per cent of the total, were closed due to violence.<sup>17</sup>

23. One common measure employed by most Missions was to support the national police forces to set up women’s situation rooms/desks to receive, analyze and respond to complaints and reports of incidents of violence, harassment, and intimidation against women, and follow up with security forces as appropriate. MINUSCA, MINUSMA, MONUSCO, and more recently, UNSOM, put in place women situation rooms and hotlines together with UNDP and UN Women and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), dedicated to protecting women candidates and voters from electoral violence with women’s direct participation and engagement.

24. Nevertheless, many candidates and CSOs remained critical of these desks and hotlines, citing their under-performance and lack of follow-up to reported incidents. In DRC, the hotline was not election-specific and was unsustainable due to lack of funding, while in Mali, the situation rooms were managed by CSOs with limited support from the Mission. In CAR, little evidence was found on response efforts to more than 5,000 calls received by 11 situation rooms through the hotlines between December 2020 and May 2021. In Somalia, the fees to file a complaint with the election dispute resolution mechanism remained prohibitive at US Dollars 3,000 especially for women candidates who lacked financial means. Lack of response, coupled with weak rule of law institutions, further eroded women’s confidence in the electoral processes and sense of safety and security required to participate in the elections.<sup>18</sup>

25. In countries where SPMs operated in the absence of a protection mandate, their protection efforts were limited, by default. In the lead up to the 2021 elections, UNSOM support for the development of women situation desks and an online incident reporting platform was introduced,

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<sup>16</sup> Diallo, Tiemoko. 2018. “Low Turnout in Mali Election Due to Security Fears, Opposition Charges Fraud.” Reuters, August 13.

<sup>17</sup> CAR Autorité Nationale des Elections, Press Conference, December 2020.

<sup>18</sup> Interviews with women candidates and elected officials in sampled countries.

but their impact on trends in political violence was not apparent. UNAMA support did not go beyond election monitoring and reporting.

26. In contrast, UNAMI offered a good illustration of purposeful prevention and protection interventions that adequately accounted for gendered aspects of electoral violence. To prevent similar political violence that women candidates experienced in 2018, the Mission served as the depository of the Electoral Charter of Honor and a new electoral code of conduct signed by the political parties in 2021, while advocating at the highest level for strict adherence to the law, and to refrain from using tactics that undermine women's participation. Close collaboration with the Supreme Committee on Elections and Gender resulted in the establishment of hotlines, assignment of a dedicated judge to follow up on reports of incidents, criminalization of cyber-attacks, and on-demand protection for women candidates.
27. In comparison to SPMs with no specific protection mandates, PKOs with uniformed components and security expertise missed the opportunity to utilize available gender disaggregated conflict and election data to inform the implementation and location of their WPS protection and prevention activities, such as setting up context-specific and gender responsive prevention measures.

**C. Mission efforts to educate and mobilize women to exercise their right to vote could not reverse the negative trend in voter turnout in all country cases.**

*C.1. Women, who constituted half of the eligible voters in most countries, faced disproportionate challenges in registering and voting.*

28. Across all countries overall voter turnout declined significantly in both presidential and parliamentary elections. In 2021, Iraq saw the lowest voter turnout (41 per cent) since 2005 (78 per cent). In DRC, voter turnout for parliament declined from 70.3 per cent (2006) to 45.4 per cent (2018). Documents reviewed pointed out to widespread violence around election times, and overall discontent with the political landscape and perceived levels of corruption eroding trust in the election results, as the main factors of declining turnout.
29. Voter registration data suggested that women were approximately half of the electorate, ranging from 46.7 per cent in CAR to 51 per cent in the DRC. The main outlier was Afghanistan, where women constituted only one-third (35 per cent) of registered voters, as well as the special case of Somalia, where at least one-third of the delegates of the electoral colleges were women.
30. Sex-disaggregated voter turnout data, in comparison, was more difficult to obtain. The national election management bodies (EMBs) did not consistently publish it, except in the case of Afghanistan where the share of women voters declined from 37 per cent in 2004 to 31 per cent in 2019.<sup>19</sup>
31. In addition to the factors mentioned above, women faced specific challenges in exercising their voting rights across all countries:
  - a) Low level of female literacy, e.g., at 17 per cent in Afghanistan and 18.9 per cent in Mali, presented a systemic barrier limiting women's awareness of their civic rights and their ability to cast an informed vote.
  - b) Lack of adequate security at polling places – and, in some cases, threats specifically directed at women-only polling stations - deterred women from voting.

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<sup>19</sup> Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) 2021 Report. Support to Gender Equality.

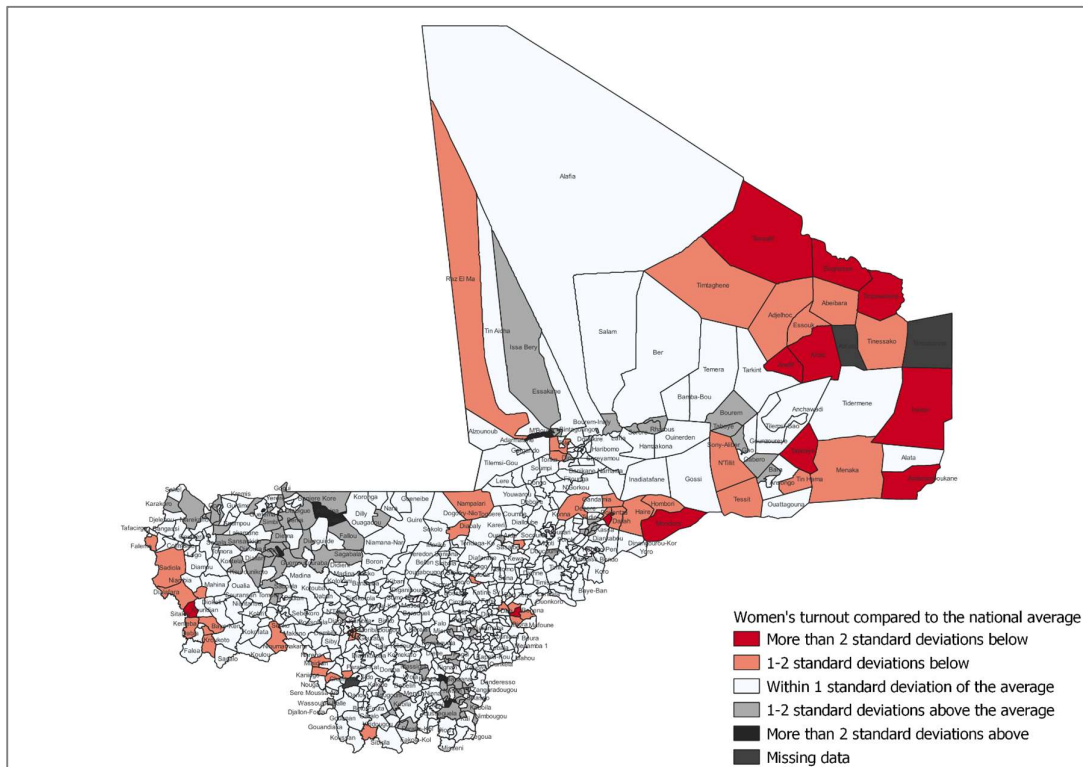
- c) Lack of adequate women election personnel, which could have helped women voters feel more at ease with photograph and fingerprint requirements.
- d) Reported coercion from family members, with women being expected, or forced, to vote based on decisions made by men in their families.
- e) Lack of, and difficulty in obtaining, national and voter identification cards due to women's reduced mobility and cultural norms. For example, introduction of biometric registration cards in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Mali, and voting machines in DRC to address election fraud prohibited some women from having their photos taken due to cultural norms and using machines that required some level of literacy.

*C.2. Missions' public outreach efforts and support to EMBs were insufficient to counteract women's increasing sense of insecurity largely due to weak gender sensitive protection and electoral processes.*

- 32. Missions' efforts to increase women participation in elections consisted of public outreach and civic education activities, as well as technical support to EMBs on gender sensitive electoral processes.
- 33. Public outreach activities made use of traditional media (i.e., radio and television) and social media to outreach rural population and youth. These activities sensitized voters and broadcasted messages promoting the importance of equal participation of women. MONUSCO, for example, used Radio Okapi to disseminate information on election procedures. In 2021, UNSOM developed a video-clip and song titled "*Let's Make the Women's Quota a Reality.*" In 2018, UNAMI launched the *#WhyNot (#Shakobeha)* awareness-raising campaign featuring successful women political activists. Civic education, for its part, was often delivered through CSOs (MINUSCA and UNAMI) and regional offices (UNAMA), who conducted door-to-door campaigns, community meetings, and loudspeaker announcements in caravans to sensitize the public. UNAMA and UNSOM also sensitized and called religious and tribal actors to support women's participation.
- 34. Missions supported EMBs in varying degrees to develop gender sensitive electoral processes, such as women-only polling stations, recruitment of women election workers and mobile registration units. In 2018, Afghanistan's EMB employed 12,000 women as election workers, and there were 7,429 women-only polling stations compared with 11,667 for men. In Iraq, all voter registration offices employed women to assist taking fingerprints and photographs. Mobile registration units were also sent to internally displaced person camps, which enabled women who lacked IDs and permanent addresses to vote. In the case of CAR and Mali, there was little evidence of the use of women-only polling stations or women election officers, despite available voter survey data indicating specific gendered challenges that women faced in polling stations.
- 35. Effects of the Missions' support for increased women voters were limited in the wake of contextual challenges exceeding the Missions' sphere of influence. Overwhelmingly, security remained the biggest challenge in all countries. In Afghanistan, the greater number of polling stations available to men put women voters at a disadvantage, requiring them to travel longer distances to vote. Finding women poll workers was also a challenge, especially in remote areas. Intense efforts from UNSOM to swiftly build the capacity of the EMB to hold direct elections based on universal suffrage, including gender sensitive electoral processes, were suspended due to the political agreement to continue holding indirect elections. MONUSCO support to the EMB in 2018 was limited in the absence of an election mandate.
- 36. Detailed voter data from the 2020 elections in Mali, was examined to determine the relationship between Mission WPS activities and women turnout rates. First, the analysis showed that there were considerable differences in women's turnout rates at the commune level (see Figure 3). The

largest number of communes with low turnout rates (i.e., with at least one standard deviation below the national average) were found in several border areas in the North, as well as a few border areas in the South. Second, the regression analysis established that MINUSMA WPS activities were negatively correlated with the female voter turnout rates in the regions. This negative relationship could be explained by insecurity which was likely to adversely and disproportionately impact women’s willingness to participate in the political process.<sup>20</sup> In addition, MINUSMA WPS activities were likely to have targeted localities in which low women voter turnout rates were expected and in which there was limited presence of State authorities. The analysis underscored the primacy of security as a precondition to promote women’s participation.

Figure 3. Mali - Deviation in women’s 2020 voter turnout rate



37. Using provincial-level turnout data from Afghanistan, an analysis of gender affinity voting was performed to test the hypothesis that women voters were more likely to vote for women candidates. The analysis found that where women comprised a larger proportion of voters who cast ballots, the number of votes cast for women as a proportion of all votes cast in that district was higher. Although this analysis did not indicate a causal relationship, it underscored the significance of Missions’ specific activities to support women’s electoral participation, and their spillover effects. Where such dedicated activities improved women voter turnout rates, women’s electoral wins were likely to improve. Similarly, where WPS activities improved women candidacy rates, women voter turnout might improve.

D. Missions’ advocacy and technical support for the development and implementation of temporary special measures (TSMs), notably gender quotas, significantly contributed to increasing or sustaining the share of women candidates and elected officials.

<sup>20</sup> Mali faced two coup d’états in August 2020 and May 2021 impeding the progress made.

*D.1. The share of women in national parliaments varied across the six countries and was a direct result of the existence and enforcement of legislative gender quotas and other TSMs.*

38. The share of women in national parliaments varied across the six project countries (see Table 5). In 2021, women constituted roughly one in four members of parliament in Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali, and Somalia. The other two countries, CAR and DRC, registered roughly one woman in eight members of their parliaments. While Afghanistan, Iraq, CAR and DRC had seen moderate changes the last decade, Mali and Somalia witnessed dramatic shifts in recent elections. In Somalia, the share of women increased from 14 per cent in 2012 to 24.2 per cent in the 2016 elections.

**Table 5. Share (%) of women in national parliaments and quota types<sup>21</sup>**

Type of Quota	Countries	2017	2021
Quota on Results	Afghanistan	27.7	27
	Iraq	25.3	28.9
Candidate Quota	CAR	8.6	12.9
	DRC	8.9	12.8
	Mali	8.8	26.5 <sup>22</sup>
Other	Somalia	24.2	24.4
World Average		23.3	25.5

39. All six countries instituted electoral gender quotas, and their enforcement was a key determinant to increase women representation in parliaments. Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia had quotas on results, requiring that the composition of the elected body reflected a minimum percentage of women. This requirement was consistently met in Afghanistan and Iraq, while the system of indirect elections in Somalia required greater discretion of clan leaders in fulfilling the quota. CAR, DRC, and Mali had quotas applying to the candidate lists put forward by political parties, which were less effective as they only applied to the share of candidates, thus did not necessarily translate into women elected. Parties in Mali largely respected the quota for women on candidate lists, while political actors in CAR and the DRC reportedly ignored these rules with no adverse consequence, producing marginal change in the share of women elected over time.

40. Missions' advocacy actions and technical support to governments to institute and maintain gender quotas were effective when political will and accountability were present. In Iraq, electoral assistance headed by UNAMI provided expert advice ensuring the new electoral system developed following the 2019 reform would be conducive to increased women participation. The quota was no longer considered as a ceiling but a floor, and these new electoral arrangements led to a 4-percentage point increase in women's representation in 2021.

41. Women's political representation in Mali saw the most dramatic increase among the six countries, attributable to a well-designed candidate quota in 2015 with accountability measures. Its impact was visible in significantly increasing women's representation in the parliament from nine per cent in 2013 to 27 per cent in 2020. MINUSMA followed up on the implementation of this law through high-level advocacy and technical support to the government, as well as mobilized CSOs to ensure its accountable implementation by parties.

<sup>21</sup> IPU Women in Politics 2021 and updated for Iraq and CAR with 2021 election results. IPU publishes data within the first quarter of the year.

<sup>22</sup> Including the Transitional National Council appointed in December 2020.



42. Similarly, in Somalia, UNSOM high-level advocacy and support to the Goodwill Ambassadors<sup>23</sup> were cited as key factors in the inclusion of the gender quota in political agreements preceding the elections. The role that quotas play was also evidenced in Puntland. Puntland recently organized universal suffrage elections and ensured that every third candidate on the list was a woman, and every tenth was a person with disabilities, which resulted in women getting elected with a share of 26.4 per cent. The sustainability of these gains remained in question, however, as the quota was not enshrined in law.
43. CAR and DRC offered insights into the importance of accountability measures to back up the quotas or parity laws. In CAR, electoral assistance headed by MINUSCA provided advice to develop the 2019 electoral code, which included the 35 per cent candidate quota, following the provisions of the 2016 Gender Parity Law. Despite the existence of a Parity Law and a candidate quota, 27 political parties failed to meet the quota and, as a result, the share of women candidates was a mere 15.6 per cent. In DRC, Mission advocacy to amend the Article 13 of the Electoral Code – which stated the non-achievement of gender parity in party candidate lists does not constitute a ground for inadmissibility of the list concerned – faced the challenge of political parties that blocked efforts to hold them accountable for gender parity.
44. Missions advocated for additional TSMs<sup>24</sup> to augment women’s representation with varying successes, such as revising candidate registration requirements that had historically disproportionately excluded women. In CAR, civil society organizations, supported by MINUSCA, successfully lobbied to remove property, literacy, and numeracy requirements in the 2019 Electoral Law, which had thus far affected women disproportionately. While in Somalia, UNSOM successfully advocated to reduce women candidate registration fees by half, in DRC, fees remained prohibitively high, with minimum influence from the international community and MONUSCO.

*D.2. Missions’ high-level advocacy for accountable implementation of the gender quotas were reinforced with capacity building support for women leaders and CSOs and contributed to increased pool of women candidates in several countries.*

45. To augment the effects of gender quotas, Mission programming on women’s political participation often provided training to prospective women candidates. Capacity building actions were developed and conducted mainly by UN Women and UNDP, occasionally in collaboration with the Missions that focused efforts on monitoring and identifying needs. For example, in Somalia, a joint programme between UNSOM, UNDP and UN Women identified needs and gaps in capacity and skills of women candidates, activists, and networks. UNAMI, using extrabudgetary funds, developed a three-phase project to undertake research on challenges for women in politics, provided needs-based training to 67 candidates, and monitored PVTW in the 2021 elections. Across all case studies, most capacity building activities focused on candidates. Several women parliamentarians highlighted the need to continue capacity building for women in office.
46. The effectiveness of such capacity building activities was demonstrated in the case of CAR. MINUSCA, in collaboration with UN Women and UNDP, organized workshops for women leaders during campaign registrations. The detailed candidate-level records from 2020 (including

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<sup>23</sup> A committee appointed by the President to advocate for the 30 per cent quota for women representatives in the parliament through sensitization and outreach campaigns with clan leaders and the international community.

<sup>24</sup> TSMs encompass gender quota laws, women situation desks/rooms, women-only polling stations, women-election workers, election registration (candidate and voters) reforms, and reduction of high campaign costs, among others.

electoral district, partisan affiliation, ballot position, first and second round individual vote-share, incumbency status, gender, and whether the candidate was eventually elected) were used to understand the electoral context and conduct analyses of the relationship between WPS participation activities and women’s representation. The regression analysis found that the presence of WPS participation activities had a positive and statistically significant effect on women’s candidacy rates - women were 15.6 per cent of candidates in 2020 compared to ten per cent in the previous election – although not on their chances of being elected. WPS activities might have led to an expansion of women’s political ambitions, leading to more women coming forward as potential candidates. This hypothesis gained credence when considering that 95.7 per cent of women candidates in 2020 were non-incumbents.

47. The presence of vibrant and well-organized CSO networks was another influential factor in increasing women’s representation. Support and capacity building to women CSOs and networks appeared to have also contributed to increase women candidacy rates and to reinforce advocacy actions for the establishment of TSMs. In the absence of an election mandate, MONUSCO devoted efforts to organize, capacitate and mobilize CSOs who advocated for the expansion of the political space for women. CSOs in Mali were instrumental in advocating for the consistent implementation of the quota law by political parties in enlisting their candidates. MINUSCA and UNAMI supported the establishment of women advisory groups which advised the SRSGs on women participation issues, which were then brought to the attention of influential political actors in the countries.

**E. Missions’ influence on the share of women appointed to government positions was limited, given the political nature of such appointments and sensitivities associated with perceived interference.**

*E.1. Across the board, fewer women than the indicated quotas were appointed to executive and government positions.*

48. Despite the gains made in overall representation of women in the national parliaments, the appointments of elected women to governmental positions or executive functions fluctuated across the case countries (see Table 6). A significant structural barrier in this regard appeared to be the political parties (and clans), which were reluctant to put forward women party members as candidates for positions of influence within the executive government.

**Table 6. Share (%) of women in ministerial positions<sup>25</sup>**

<b>Countries</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>Afghanistan</b>	16.7	6.5
<b>Iraq</b>	10.5	9.1
<b>CAR</b>	17.4	20.7
<b>DRC</b>	11.6	27
<b>Mali</b>	24.2	21
<b>Somalia</b>	6.7	18.5
<b>World Average</b>		21

49. Between 2017 and 2021, while Iraq, Mali and Afghanistan registered higher percentages of women elected officials across country cases (See Table 5) attributable to well-designed gender quotas, the percentage of women in ministerial positions declined and remained less than the other cases in the same period (See Table 6). Since 2019, Iraq had two women ministers, and the Ministry of Women was downgraded to a directorate in 2015. In Afghanistan, the former

<sup>25</sup> IPU Women in Politics 2021, updated for Mali and DRC.

President's effort to appoint more women to senior positions received backlash from certain groups perceived to represent elite background. Similarly, in Mali, women representatives complained about lack of adherence by the political party leaders to the quota law in government appointments.

50. The percentage of women in ministerial positions increased in DRC, CAR and Somalia between 2012 and 2021, with some caveats. In DRC, the over 400 Congolese political parties with low women membership (between zero to 16 per cent) were considered a significant gatekeeper towards women's appointments. Due to the commitment of the incumbent President who declined the list of cabinet members proposed by the first government in 2019 on grounds of gender imbalance, several women were later appointed to influential portfolios as ministers or deputy ministers (mining, labor, central bank, etc.). In CAR, despite an increase from 2017 to 2021, the share of women in ministerial positions did not meet the Parity Law and remained highly susceptible to party leaders' political will. In Somalia, the increase in appointments was downplayed due to perceived lack of influence of their portfolios in the country's development trajectory.

*E.2. Missions' advocacy for the appointment of women chairs of EMBs was effective in mainstreaming gender into operations and activities of these entities.*

51. Missions' efforts to address disproportionate representation of women within the governmental positions were limited due to the political nature of these appointments. Missions' activities or strategies did not often purposefully target the political parties as an influential gatekeeper to these appointments. Nevertheless, Missions explored other avenues to advocate for appointments of women to portfolios that could be catalytic for gender-responsive political and elections processes.
52. The most common avenue was advocacy to appoint women as chairs of the EMBs. The MONUSCO, UNAMA, UNAMI and UNSOM good offices and advocacy were successful in this regard with far reaching positive consequences for women voters and candidates. The woman chair in the election commission in Somalia designed an institutional gender mainstreaming strategy and worked closely with UNSOM to implement gender-responsive election processes (i.e., registration, outreach to women voters) while preparing for a potential universal suffrage in 2021. Similarly, in Iraq, the only woman election commissioner out of nine instituted gender parity measures in the EMB and chaired the Supreme Committee on Elections and Gender with effective actions to mitigate PVTW, as discussed previously.
53. Another avenue Missions explored was the inclusion of women in the ongoing peace processes to carve out a larger space for women in politics. In Mali, MINUSMA organized a high-level workshop on women's participation in peace and political processes that resulted in the articulation of women's needs and priorities and mobilized the inclusion of more women (including those from signatory armed groups) in the Comité de suivi de l'accord (agreement monitoring committee). Similarly, MINUSCA mobilized civil society actors to advocate for the inclusion of women in the peace negotiations (which resulted in the selection of eight women out of 78 delegates) and the agreement's monitoring mechanisms, made up of 16 per cent women at the national level in 2021. Notwithstanding the innate differences in engagement in peace and political processes, Mission staff believed that inclusion of more women early on in peace talks and negotiations presented a window of opportunity for more expansive political space for women later.
54. In all these efforts, Mission senior leadership's direct advocacy with national counterparts was noteworthy. All Missions covered included at least one female senior official at the level of SRSG or DSRSG following the Organization's commitment to achieve gender parity at the highest levels.

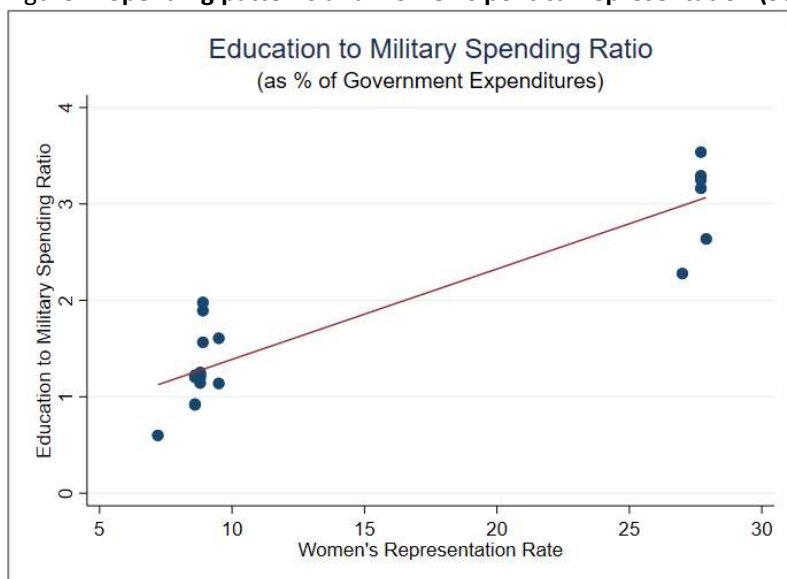
Especially in the case of UNSOM, MONUSCO, MINUSMA and UNAMI, the Mission leadership made women’s political agency an integral part of their advocacy efforts.

- F. Missions together with the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) attempted to form and empower multi-party women caucuses to the extent possible, yet the investments in quality female leadership and influence did not translate into improvements in public goods and services.

*F.1. Higher rates of women’s representation in project countries were associated with an increase in the ratio of education to military expenditures. However, elected women officials faced significant challenges in introducing women-friendly policies in their respective parliaments.*

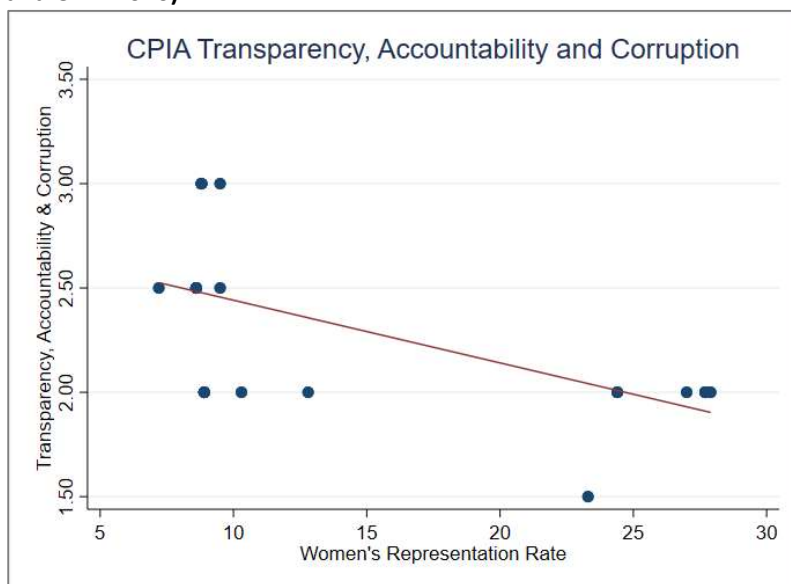
- 55. The relationships between the proportion of women representatives in legislative assemblies and shifts in spending priorities, and greater societal confidence and trust in government as indicators of peace durability were examined.
- 56. In the six cases, only one aspect of peace durability was present. A review of two sets of cross-national datasets<sup>26</sup> indicated that higher rates of women’s political representation were positively correlated with spending that was more focused on education than military (see Figure 4). In contrast, the perception of good governance slightly declined in these countries (see Figure 5).

Figure 4. Spending patterns and women’s political representation (Source: WDI 2020)



<sup>26</sup> World Bank WDI and CPIA datasets.

Figure 5. Perception of good governance and women’s political representation (Source: WDI and CPIA 2020)



57. There are limitations to these analyses. First, given the time-limited nature of the data and analysis<sup>27</sup>, it was not possible to establish whether the shift to education spending from military had an impact on peace durability. Second, perceptual values of good governance cannot be directly associated with change in women’s representation rate, as the former mostly result from major policy innovations or laws, which were not observed in this period.
58. Significant challenges were faced by elected women officials in introducing bills and/or passing influential policies on gender equality and women’s empowerment. First, powerful political party blocs generally dominated by male officials protected the status quo. In Mali, the former female Minister of Women was reportedly harassed and later ousted following her tabling of a draft bill in the parliament on prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, which was publicly rejected by powerful religious groups. Second, the nature of politics and need for political survival meant that rather than advancing women’s agenda, some women elected officials reportedly gravitated towards the interests of their political blocs. The domestic violence bill in Iraq did not receive support from some women officials. In Somalia, some women parliamentarians were observed to vote for the draft electoral code which excluded the gender quota provisions.

*F.2. Significant gaps remained in women’s capacity to influence policy making upon being elected, necessitating follow-up support that Missions could not adequately provide.*

59. Across all countries, women parliamentarians faced limitations in advancing policy agendas towards promulgation of woman-friendly laws or leading to improvement in the conditions of their constituents. Missions reported conducting few activities addressing these gaps to avoid any perception of interference and to maintain impartiality. In Afghanistan, for example, some women parliamentarians refused the Mission’s support for capacity building to minimize the perception of pursuing a Western agenda.
60. Recognizing these limitations of women parliamentarians, MINUSMA and UNSOM shared concrete plans to incorporate women officials in their prospective gender strategies as a target

<sup>27</sup> Measurements of good governance were difficult to obtain due to data collection challenges in post-conflict environments.

group. Together with UNCT, MINUSMA recently endeavored to form a Women Observatory to monitor and provide continuous support to women in politics.

61. Typically, UNDP and UN Women took the lead in forming and capacitating multiparty women parliamentary caucuses, as in the case of CAR where the Forum of Women Parliamentarians was established. Compared to UNCT entities that were considered better equipped to provide technical and operational support, Missions’ biggest advantage appeared to be high-level advocacy, therefore their specific support to women elected officials was indirect, either through technical support to the female civil society actors or capacity building support for women representatives in local or national peace processes, as in the cases of UNAMA, MINUSCA and MINUSMA. Civil society actors pointed to occasional overlap and lack of synergy across trainings offered by these entities.
62. Due to the pervasive structural barriers that women could not overcome alone, the absence of long-term capacity building activities for women elected officials across party lines remained a gap. In addition, Missions made limited efforts to develop inclusion strategies encompassing under-represented sections of society including non-elite women, thereby missing the opportunity to nurture a more diverse cohort of decision-makers in the future.

## V. Recommendations

63. OIOS-IED makes three main important recommendations to the Missions, with the understanding that UNAMA may not be able to implement recommendations 1 and 3 under the current context. OIOS-IED also makes one important recommendation to DPO and DPPA.

Pillar	Recommendation	Indicators of Achievement	Responsible entity
<b>Protection and Prevention</b>	1. Develop both long-term prevention and short-term protection measures that specifically address gendered violence targeting women around elections. These efforts should be backed by and based on reliable gender-sensitive conflict, political and/or electoral analysis to include gender disaggregated data on elections, violence type, targets, and location.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender responsive electoral security strategy addressing the elections cycle</li> <li>• Documentary evidence of support to national efforts for the establishment of short- and long-term measures (including TSMS discussed in this evaluation) to prevent gender-based political violence</li> </ul>	All Missions
<b>Participation</b>	2. Anchor existing (or develop new) Mission strategy to promote women’s political participation and representation in evidence-based analysis of the specific country context (security, humanitarian, and developmental) in line with	Updated/new Mission-strategy with country-specific analysis and data, building on the Electoral Assistance - Needs Assessment Mission Gender Checklist	All Missions

Pillar	Recommendation	Indicators of Achievement	Responsible entity		
	Mission mandate and capacities. The strategy should include:				
	2.1. Advocacy and technical support to strengthen TSMs including laws to address context-specific barriers faced by women	Documentary evidence of tailored advocacy and technical support for TSMs and related accountability measures			
	2.2. High-level advocacy for the establishment of accountability, enforcement and incentive mechanisms for the national political actors and parties to ensure implementation of such favorable laws				
<b>System coherence</b>	3. Harmonize data strategy, advocacy and support activities to improve coherence with UNCT in line with the principle of integration of electoral assistance in mission settings to further the WPS agenda in the following ways:	Mission tracks specific women participation/ representation indicators and shares responsibility for data collection with relevant UNCT entities	All Missions		
	3.1. As part of the Mission data strategy in the country, reinforce Mission's performance monitoring frameworks and coordinate data gathering and tracking to inform WPS programming				
	3.2. Target political parties/clans more deliberately to advocate and provide incentives for inclusion of women in party lists and for inclusion of non-elite candidates, taking into consideration existing policies on electoral assistance			Documentary evidence of advocacy efforts with political parties and clans	
	3.3. Mobilize extrabudgetary and peacebuilding funds for long-term capacity building of women in politics across party lines			Evidence of resource mobilization	

Pillar	Recommendation	Indicators of Achievement	Responsible entity
	3.4. Coordinate the strategies and activities required to address long-term barriers facing women such as literacy levels, political awareness, sensitization of male leaders, etc.	Specific activities and indicators of achievements in UNSDCF coordinated with specific entities to address long-term barriers	
	4. Support and coordinate the contextualized WPS efforts of missions to enhance learning and knowledge exchange.	Periodic knowledge exchange among peace missions on context-specific learnings, best practices, risks, and mitigation measures and tactics	DPPA and DPO



TO: Ms. Fatoumata Ndiaye, Under-Secretary-General  
A: Office of Internal Oversight Services

DATE: 28 April 2022

REFERENCE:  
CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

THROUGH:  
S/C DE:

FROM: Rosemary A. DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General  
DE: for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs



Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General  
for Peace Operations



SUBJECT: **Draft Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on Evaluation of Women, Peace and Security in field-based missions: Elections and Political Transitions**  
OBJET: **Security in field-based missions: Elections and Political Transitions**

1. We refer to your memorandum (OIOS-2022-00479) of 7 April 2022 transmitting the draft Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on Evaluation of Women, Peace and Security in field-based missions: Elections and Political Transitions. Thank you for undertaking a consultative process and for incorporating many of the initial comments that our offices and relevant missions had submitted on the earlier draft of the report.
2. Promoting the participation of women in electoral and political processes as well as ensuring prevention of violence against women and providing the necessary protection for women, particularly in conflict situations and political transitions, are among the key priorities of the United Nations. In this regard, and as also noted in the report, numerous steps have been taken so far in all the above key areas. But there is a lot of room for improvement, and the report and its recommendations will certainly help us to address the existing gaps/challenges and build on the past experiences to further strengthen the Organization's support to women in all the various areas highlighted in the report.
3. The missions and the Headquarters have reviewed the evaluation and its related recommendations. We are pleased to inform you that DPPA and DPO will be accepting the recommendations of the OIOS set forth in the draft report, to the extent that they are addressed to those two departments. You will find attached concrete action plans from DPPA and DPO but also from MINUSCA, MINUSMA, MONUSCO, UNAMI and UNSOM to implement the recommendations of the report. As noted in your report, particular considerations apply to UNAMA given the developments in Afghanistan.
4. In implementing the recommendations, where actions fall within the realm of electoral assistance, the relevant framework established by the General Assembly will apply, including the clear leadership role of the focal point for electoral assistance matters in ensuring system-wide

coherence and consistency. This may include providing policy and technical support to the relevant missions in the implementation of their action plans.

5. As per the request of UNSOM we also wish to note the reference made in the report to the uniqueness of Somalia's indirect electoral process and that the wording in the report on this matter could have been further strengthened. Somalia's unique context makes the electoral process different and sometimes challenging as its features are different from that of popular elections models and this needs to be more clearly reflected in the report.