



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2024/071

Audit of gender mainstreaming and responsiveness in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

UNIFIL developed adequate gender mainstreaming and parity reporting structures, strategies and training; however, it needed to review the relevance of gender mainstreaming activities and enhance monitoring of the work plan

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Audit of gender mainstreaming and responsiveness in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of gender mainstreaming and responsiveness in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). The objective of the audit was to assess whether UNIFIL adequately and effectively implemented gender mainstreaming and parity strategies. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2024 and included higher and medium-risk areas, which included: (a) planning for gender mainstreaming; (b) monitoring and reporting of gender mainstreaming activities; and (c) gender parity.

UNIFIL had reporting structures that supported mission-wide integration of gender perspectives in its operations. The Mission developed training material on gender matters and trained peacekeeping personnel. Measures to attain gender equality and gender integration were reported through various reports. The Mission also adequately implemented and regularly monitored gender parity targets.

UNIFIL developed the Women, Peace and Security Action Plan (WPS Action Plan) to implement gender mainstreaming strategies and incorporated input from all the military and civilian components. However, OIOS noted a disproportion between gender mainstreaming and gender parity activities in the Action Plan. OIOS also noted the inconsistent level of detail in the monitoring and evaluation forms, and the established process did not adequately monitor the execution of the WPS Action Plan.

OIOS made two recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, UNIFIL needed to:

- Review the action plan submissions from the civilian and military gender focal points to confirm that the objectives and activities are relevant to gender mainstreaming before inclusion in the WPS Action Plan; and
- Update its gender mainstreaming policy guidance to: (a) incorporate regular monitoring of the WPS Action Plan; and (b) include specificity on information that gender focal points should include in the monitoring and evaluation form.

UNIFIL accepted both recommendations and has initiated action to implement them. Actions required to close the recommendations are indicated in Annex I.

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Audit of gender mainstreaming and responsiveness in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of gender mainstreaming and responsiveness in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).
2. The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 established gender mainstreaming as the global strategy for making women's and men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes. In 1997, the United Nations Economic and Social Council defined gender mainstreaming as "the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels".
3. On 31 October 2000, the Security Council adopted the resolution (S/RES/1325) on women, peace and security, reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction. Resolution 1325 urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. One of the Secretary-General's priorities for 2023 was the right to full gender equality.
4. The Gender Advisory Unit (GAU) in UNIFIL is mandated to integrate, as a cross-cutting issue, the full and effective participation, involvement and representation of women at all levels. GAU is headed by the Gender Advisor at the P-5 level, who reports to the Head of Mission and Force Commander (HoM/FC). The Unit comprises two national staff at the National Professional Officer and National General Services level. The Human Resources Management Section is responsible for implementing the Mission's gender parity strategy and monitoring gender parity progress against annual targets at all position levels.
5. Gender mainstreaming requires planning, guidance and monitoring of gender mainstreaming efforts and is the responsibility of each member of UNIFIL. In UNIFIL, gender mainstreaming comprises a network of military and civilian gender focal points (GFPs). UNIFIL has one civilian gender task force and four military gender task forces in: (a) Sector East; (b) Sector West; (c) Maritime Sector; and (d) Military Headquarters.
6. The United Nations-wide Gender Parity Strategy aims to create more diversity, inclusivity, and gender balance in the United Nations. The strategy sets targets for equal representation of women and men, with specific commitments in the following areas: (a) leadership and accountability; (b) senior management; (c) recruitment and retention; and (d) field operations.
7. Gender data is integrated into the Mission's data collection system, Tracker Engagements Community (TEC). TEC records women's interaction and participation in outreach activities and key leader engagement meetings. TEC was reviewed in the audit of civil affairs activities in UNIFIL¹ which was completed in October 2023; therefore, OIOS will not conduct any data governance or data management tests of TEC in this audit.
8. Comments provided by UNIFIL are incorporated in italics.

¹ OIOS report 2023/052

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

9. The objective of the audit was to assess whether UNIFIL adequately and effectively implemented gender mainstreaming and parity strategies.

10. This audit was included in the 2024 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the operational and reputational risks related to achieving gender mainstreaming and parity objectives to support UNIFIL mandate delivery and the Secretary-General's gender-related priority areas.

11. OIOS conducted this audit from August to November 2024 and covered the period from 1 January 2022 to 30 June 2024. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered high and medium-risk areas in gender mainstreaming and parity, which included: (a) planning for gender mainstreaming; (b) monitoring and reporting of gender mainstreaming activities; and (c) gender parity.

12. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews of 19 key personnel comprising 2 GAU personnel, 10 civilian GFPs, 3 military gender advisors, and 4 human resources personnel involved in gender mainstreaming and parity; (b) review of relevant documents including the minutes of 16 meetings held between the HoM/FC and GAU, gender mainstreaming and parity strategies, and guidelines; (c) analytical review of the 161 objectives in the Women, Peace and Security Action Plan to assess for gender mainstreaming relevance; and (d) comparison of Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance / Business Transformation and Accountability Division management dashboard and Umoja data to UNIFIL gender parity reports.

13. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Planning for gender mainstreaming

The Mission was updating its Gender Mainstreaming Strategy

14. The United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women requires entities to have a gender strategy and policy, including an implementation plan with time frames. In 2018, the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) released the Gender Responsiveness UN Peacekeeping Policy, which requires gender equality and women, peace and security (WPS) principles to be reflected in all strategic documents, policies and guidelines relevant to peacekeeping operations.

15. UNIFIL developed a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy in 2019 covering four years up to July 2023. The Strategy covered gender mainstreaming mandate, gender equality focus areas and outcomes in peacekeeping. OIOS review of the Strategy noted the following:

- Three focus areas were embedded in the Strategy: (a) strengthening the capacity of all personnel; (b) strengthening management to achieve gender equality and WPS results; and (c) effective engagement and partnerships with the United Nations and other partners. Each focus area had expected outcomes; however, the strategy could have benefited from clear timelines for achieving the strategic goals.

- The Strategy included specific policy guidance detailing the policy’s purpose, defined gender mainstreaming, outlined the monitoring process, and specified when the strategy and policy would be reviewed.

16. The guidance stipulated that the strategy should be reviewed every four years or earlier if a new DPO gender responsiveness policy is issued. However, UNIFIL has not reviewed the Strategy despite the lapse of four years and the issuance of a new policy by DPO in May 2024. GAU stated that it was updating the strategy, which would be presented to the HoM/FC for approval by the end of the year. A review of documents on the work done so far confirmed that GAU had commenced the review process.

Need to review the relevance of gender mainstreaming activities in the Women, Peace and Security Action Plan

17. UNIFIL developed the Women, Peace and Security Action Plan (WPS Action Plan) to implement gender mainstreaming strategies. The Plan translated resolutions, mandates and strategy into a mission-level work plan with gender-related outputs, success criteria and intended outcomes. A review of the 2023-2024 WPS Action Plan confirmed that it was aligned with the UNIFIL Gender Mainstreaming Strategy, the Mission Concept and mandate and approved by the HoM/FC. OIOS review also confirmed that input had been provided by all the military and civilian components. Submissions of input for the plan were made by the GFPs to GAU on an annual basis following approval from their respective chiefs. GAU incorporated the input into the various components of the WPS Action Plan, including the objectives, related activities, timeline, target date and success criteria. Further interviews with 13 GFPs confirmed that GAU provided guidance during the preparation of the WPS Action Plan.

18. OIOS noted that 88 (or 55 per cent) of 161 objectives and activities in the WPS Action Plan were related to gender mainstreaming, such as: (a) Civil Affairs Section to identify projects/interventions in support of women organizations to empower women and other vulnerable groups in collaboration with local authorities; and (b) Civil-Military Coordination Unit to help identify different vulnerabilities, needs, and the interest of men, women, boys and girls. However, OIOS noted that 73 (or 45 per cent) of the objectives and activities were not clearly related to gender mainstreaming but rather related to objectives for gender parity. Some examples included: (a) the Joint Operations Centre, which aimed to achieve a balanced workforce; and (b) the Supply Chain Performance Management Section to maintain a gender balance in the section.

19. The primary focus of the WPS Action Plan should be on gender mainstreaming, and not to be confused with other objectives. The confusion was attributed to ineffective GAU review of component work plan submissions to clarify what constituted gender mainstreaming and what should be incorporated into the Plan. UNIFIL may inadequately allocate its resources if some objectives within the WPS Action Plan are not focused on gender mainstreaming.

(1) UNIFIL should review the action plan submissions from the civilian and military gender focal points to confirm that the objectives and activities are relevant to gender mainstreaming before inclusion in the Women, Peace and Security Action Plan.

UNIFIL accepted recommendation 1 and stated that it would implement the recommendation for the 2025/2026 Women, Peace and Security Action Plan.

UNIFIL had adequate reporting structures for overseeing and implementing gender mainstreaming

20. In UNIFIL, the highest authority responsible for gender mainstreaming was the HoM/FC, who reported to the Under-Secretary-General of DPO on issues relating to gender and the implementation of the WPS agenda. The HoM/FC was supported by GAU, which was a requirement of Security Council resolution 2242 (2015) for a senior gender advisor to be located in the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General or head of mission.

21. GAU provided strategic guidance and technical support on gender-related matters through monthly meetings mandated by the UNIFIL Gender Mainstreaming Strategy. During the audit period, 16 meetings were held between the HoM/FC and the Chief of GAU out of the expected 30, with the last one being held in October 2023. OIOS confirmed matters that needed HoM/FC input or approval were addressed through emails in the absence of meetings. OIOS review of the 16 meetings showed that various issues relating to gender were discussed, such as: (a) gender mainstreaming for the Lebanese Armed Forces; and (b) UNIFIL support to the Lebanese Armed Forces gender department. GAU also used the meetings to obtain approval from the HoM/FC to conduct activities, such as celebrating International Women’s Day and the global open day on WPS.

22. UNIFIL had one civilian gender task force and four military gender task forces. The task forces comprised civilian and military GFPs responsible for monitoring and evaluating gender mainstreaming efforts. UNIFIL had 25 civilian and 286 military GFPs responsible for gender mainstreaming in their respective offices, sections, units and battalions. OIOS reviewed the terms of reference for the civilian and military GFPs and confirmed their roles were clearly documented and outlined. Interviews with 10 civilian GFPs and 3 military gender advisors confirmed that they understood their roles and responsibilities. Also, OIOS confirmed, as highlighted throughout this report, that the network of GFPs performed the responsibilities outlined in the terms of reference, such as: (a) identifying gender mainstreaming priorities and deliverables; (b) providing input into the WPS Action Plan; and (c) completing the monitoring and reporting form related to gender mainstreaming activities.

UNIFIL adequately provided training on gender mainstreaming

23. OIOS confirmed GAU had developed training materials that were used for gender-related training and capacity development related to: (a) competency-based interviews; (b) civilian and military gender task forces; and (c) training of trainers. GAU translated the training material and the gender pocket guidelines into 12 languages to accommodate military personnel who did not speak English. Topics covered in these training materials included how to mainstream gender into UNIFIL, gender early signs of conflict, and risks associated with women and girls in conflict/post-conflict.

24. During the audit period, GAU conducted the training in conjunction with the Integrated Mission Training Centre and achieved a 100 per cent completion rate of induction training, mandatory training and commanders’ briefs. OIOS noted that: (a) all 584 military staff officers and civilian personnel attended induction training, which included a session on gender; (b) all new civilian personnel completed the mandatory online course on “I Know Gender” effective 30 September 2024; and (c) all military personnel were trained through commanders’ briefs. GAU also made presentations to military commanders upon their arrival in the Mission and trained military GFPs, who trained the rest of their battalions. Between January 2022 and September 2024, 33,905 military personnel had been trained.

B. Monitoring and reporting of gender mainstreaming activities

Need for guidance on information requirements in the monitoring and evaluation form

25. The WPS Action Plan states that GAU is responsible for monitoring the implementation of gender mainstreaming activities in UNIFIL. Every focal point must submit a monitoring and evaluation form to GAU on the implementation of gender mainstreaming activities contained in the WPS Action Plan.

26. OIOS reviewed all 48 section and unit² monitoring and evaluation forms, comprising 23 from the military component and 25 from the civilian component, and confirmed that the forms were duly completed for 2022 and 2023. All forms for 2023 addressed five areas: (a) what was accomplished; (b) what remains to be finalized; (c) what is ongoing; (d) factors affecting success in accomplishing objectives; and (e) barriers or challenges that delayed or prohibited reaching the objectives

27. However, OIOS observed that the level of detail in the forms varied. For instance, where the GFPs were required to state what had been accomplished, some responses indicated specific objectives that had been met and how. Whereas others just gave a general statement that they either had been met or did not provide any details. In the absence of sufficient information in the monitoring and evaluation forms, it was difficult to confirm whether the objectives had been met or not. As this feedback is required to formulate the Plan for the following year, a lack of adequate information could lead to a poorly formulated Plan. The variance in detail provided in the forms was due to a lack of guidance on how much detail and what types of information should be included.

28. The monitoring and reporting forms were designed to gather and provide input into the following year's Action Plan, whereas monitoring requires a periodic assessment of progress made on the Action Plan and making the necessary adjustments during the year. However, GAU did not establish a proper arrangement for monitoring and assessment, which was attributed to a lack of guidance.

(2) UNIFIL should update its gender mainstreaming policy guidance to: (a) incorporate regular monitoring of the Women, Peace and Security Action Plan; and (b) include specificity on information that gender focal points should include in the monitoring and evaluation form.

UNIFIL accepted recommendation 2 and stated that it would update its gender mainstreaming policy guidance as per recommendation.

The Mission could provide more information on some Women, Peace and Security indicators

29. Security Council resolution 1889 (2009) highlights the importance of monitoring and adopting indicators about gender issues. In 2018, DPO launched 15 core WPS indicators³ to measure performance against the WPS agenda. All peacekeeping missions are required to report on the WPS indicators.

² UNIFIL consisted of 48 sections and units, comprising all 25 civilian and 286 military GFPs. Each section or unit submitted one monitoring and evaluation form. For example, the Maritime section, comprising 18 military GFPs, submitted one form.

³ The WPS indicators were categorized into four pillars, each with several indicators, which included: (a) prevention – three indicators; (b) participation – four indicators; (c) protection – three indicators; and (d) management – five indicators. For example, an indicator under the management pillar was the number of quick impact projects that targeted gender equality and women, peace and security.

30. UNIFIL reported on the WPS indicators through bi-annual and annual reports to the Gender Unit in DPO. GAU also kept abreast of the progress made on the indicators through its engagements with government institutions. For example, GAU participated in: (a) Lebanon's National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000), which included ensuring the participation of Lebanese women in decision-making; and (b) the establishment of the Lebanese Armed Forces' Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and development of a network of GFPs in the different government departments.

31. The WPS indicators template from DPO provided fields for value, total, source and comment. OIOS review of the status of the 15 indicators contained in the end-of-year report for 2023 showed that 5⁴ did not apply to UNIFIL. Of the 10 remaining indicators, 2, under the management pillar, were not adequately reported on. These two indicators did not have any explanation as to why the indicators had not been achieved in the comment field. UNIFIL could benefit by providing additional and detailed information and explanations for the WPS indicators to support and enhance the review and analysis of the indicators.

UNIFIL adequately reported on gender mainstreaming and parity

32. UNIFIL is required to report on gender equality and gender integration regularly. UNIFIL achieved this through different reporting mechanisms, such as: the Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council, Action for Peacekeeping (A4P), and WPS mid-year and end-of-year reports. Examples of reporting during the audit period included:

- GAU made five submissions to the HoM/FC for inclusion in the Secretary-General's report. Areas covered included: (a) gender breakdown of UNIFIL patrols; (b) analysis of the impact of mixed gender patrols; and (c) progress on increasing the number of women in UNIFIL.
- GAU provided input to three A4P reports, which covered: (a) how gender equality and WPS were integrated into the Mission; and (ii) significant developments in the Mission's area of operation in advancing the WPS agenda.
- GAU reported on WPS in the mid-year and end-of-year reports. Matters reported on included: (a) progress made on participation, protection and prevention; (b) progress made on gender as it related to the Mission mandates; and (c) best practices, challenges and lessons learned.

C. Gender parity

UNIFIL adequately monitored the gender parity targets in the parity strategy

33. UNIFIL developed a Mission-specific gender parity strategy with specific timelines for achieving the United Nations gender targets. UNIFIL also implemented monitoring mechanisms, which included: (a) reviewing and following up on real-time quarterly reporting of gender statistics on the Secretariat's dashboard; and (b) providing regular updates on the gender composition to decision-makers (e.g., HoM/FC); and (c) manually computing and publishing monthly gender balance reports for all categories of staff. The Mission also documented justification in cases where shortlisted female candidates were not selected or considered for the shortlist. OIOS review of two recruitment cases where shortlisted female

⁴ Two indicators related to the participation of women in peace negotiations within the area of responsibility. Two related to statistics on gender-based violence, which UNIFIL stated it is not collecting due to its interpretation of the mandate that its role is to support the implementation of Lebanon's National Action Plan, which included prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence. One indicator related to the protection of civilians by the United Nations Police and UNIFIL does not have a police component.

candidates were not selected confirmed that adequate reasons for the decision had been provided and documented.

34. OIOS review of the quarterly gender parity of UNIFIL international civilian staffing indicated that the Mission had only met its 2024 annual targets at the P-2 level but did not meet its targets for the other levels, as shown in table 1. Furthermore, there were no female staff at FS-7 for the audit period, as the grade had only three positions and no movements.

Table 1: UNIFIL gender parity actual performance and targets by position grades

Grades	Actual performance (as at 30 September 2024)	Target	Variance
D-1	20%	32%	-12%
P-5	37%	50%	-13%
P-4	36%	50%	-14%
P-3	37%	50%	-13%
P-2	50%	50%	0%
FS-7	0%	32%	-32%
FS-6	34%	50%	-16%
FS-5	43%	50%	-7%
FS-4	30%	50%	-20%

35. UNIFIL explained that the main reason for not meeting the gender parity targets was a lack of qualified female candidates, especially for positions in fields such as engineering and information technology. The recent change of the duty station to the non-family category also negatively impacted the appeal of the duty station for female candidates. As the Mission reviewed, followed up and documented justifications for not achieving its annual targets, OIOS did not make a recommendation.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

36. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNIFIL for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of gender mainstreaming and responsiveness in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁵ / Important ⁶	C/ O ⁷	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁸
1.	UNIFIL should review the action plan submissions from the civilian and military gender focal points to confirm that the objectives and activities are relevant to gender mainstreaming before inclusion in the Women, Peace and Security Action Plan.	Important	O	Evidence of review of action plan submissions to confirm that objectives and activities contained therein are relevant to gender mainstreaming.	30 June 2025
2.	UNIFIL should update its gender mainstreaming policy guidance to: (a) incorporate regular monitoring of the Women, Peace and Security Action Plan; and (b) include specificity on information that gender focal points should include in the monitoring and evaluation form.	Important	O	Updated gender mainstreaming policy guidance that includes regular monitoring of the gender mainstreaming action plan and specific information that gender focal points should include in their monitoring and evaluation forms.	30 June 2025

⁵ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

⁶ Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

⁷ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

⁸ Date provided by UNIFIL in response to recommendations.

APPENDIX I

Management Response

Management Response

Audit of gender mainstreaming and responsiveness in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1.	UNIFIL should review the action plan submissions from the civilian and military gender focal points to confirm that the objectives and activities are relevant to gender mainstreaming before inclusion in the Women, Peace and Security Action Plan.	Important	Yes	Chief Gender Advisory Unit	30 June 2025	The 2024/2025 Women, Peace, and Security Action Plan is already underway and the Commanders and Military Gender Focal Points who participated in its establishment have rotated. The recommendation will be implemented for the 2025/2026 Women, Peace, and Security Action Plan.
2.	UNIFIL should update its gender mainstreaming policy guidance to: (a) incorporate regular monitoring of the Women, Peace and Security Action Plan; and (b) include specificity on information that gender focal points should include in the monitoring and evaluation form.	Important	Yes	Chief Gender Advisory Unit	30 June 2025	UNIFIL will update its gender mainstreaming policy guidance as per the recommendation. The implementation timeline is based on the ongoing situation in Lebanon and the required active participation of the Gender Focal Points in the process.

¹ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

² Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.