



The Representation of Women in African-Led Peace Support Operations

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Abstract

The discourse on the evolving nature of African-led peace support operations (PSO) is not complete without asking how gender-inclusive they are. Women have historically been underrepresented within the peace and security space. While several interventions have been made to ensure that PSOs on the continent become better, the same cannot be said for gender inclusion. This article examines the participation of women in African-led PSOs. It draws on Rwanda as a case study to contextualize the discourse on how gender inclusive African police and troops contributing countries (P/TCCs) are. The analysis finds that efforts at improving PSOs on the African continent have not translated into increased representation of women. In particular, African P/TCCs are yet to ensure a considerable number of women in their deployments. The article recommends that there needs to be concerted effort by African P/TCCs and other regional organizations to ensure gender-inclusivity in African-led PSOs.

Keywords

Africa – peace support operations – women – participation – peace – and security

1 Introduction

Twenty-three years after the passing of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and other regional frameworks that sought to increase

women's participation in peace and security, the question remains, what is the state of play in Africa? Specifically looking at peace support operations (PSOs), it is important to ask questions such as, are women actively participating in PSOs? If so, what role do women play in PSOs? These questions inform the need to evaluate the gender inclusivity of PSOs. This is because the evolution of the African-led PSOs is garnering attention within academic discourse and other related sectors. A plethora of reasons is responsible for this growing attention, part of which is the need for the inclusion and active participation of women in peace operations.¹ Mostly because discussions around PSOs do not feature the low number of women in these operations as it is not seen as a hard security concern. Domingo *et al.*² note that the participation of women is not often centered when international discourse on peace and security arises. They note that the prioritization of hard security issues is still prevalent which has led to the relegation of the calls for women's participation in peace and security. United Nations (UN)³ contends that the fact that women and girls are frequently seen as the conduits of cultural identity, turn into key targets during conflicts as well as the weaponization of sexual and gender-based violence during conflicts makes it imperative for women's participation in peace and security to be prioritized. They further argue that even though the changes in armed conflict over the last decade affect women and girls, their participation in peace and security is not prioritized.⁴

The participation of women in peace and security is one of the ways to foster the increased representation of women in public decision-making.⁵ However, organized peace processes such as mediation, signing of peace agreements, and peace operations, often do not feature women as participants.⁶ Thus, justifications for why women should significantly participate in peace operations have not yielded commensurate results. Nonetheless, the continued

1 Jamille Bigio and Rachel Vogelstein, 'Increasing Female Participation in Peacekeeping Operations', (Council on Foreign Relations, 26 September 2018) <https://www.cfr.org/report/increasing-female-participation-peacekeeping-operations>.

2 Pilar Domingo, Tam O'Neil, Marta Foresti, 'Women's participation in peace and security: Normative ends, political means', (Overseas Development Institute Briefing 88, May 2014), pp. 1–6. <https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/8961.pdf>.

3 United Nations, 'Women, Peace, and Security' Study Submitted by the Secretary-General Pursuant to Security Resolution 1325 (2000) (United Nations Publications, 2002, pp. 1–169) <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/eWPS.pdf>.

4 United Nations, 'Women, Peace and Security', pp. 75.

5 Domingo, O'Neil and Foresti, 'Women's participation in peace and security', pp. 3.

6 See: Helen Scanlon, 'Gender and Politics of Reconciliation', (Institute of Justice and Reconciliation, Occasional Paper no. 19, 2016) http://ijr.org.za/home/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Gender-and-the-Politics-of-Reconciliation_Helen-Scanlon_2016.pdf.

underrepresentation of women in African-led PSO s as well as the relationship between gender equality and peace was acknowledged by relevant regional organizations who intensified calls for women's inclusion. To this effect, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1325 in 2000 which is the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda to foster a gendered perspective on peace and security.⁷ The African Union (AU) has instituted instruments like the Continental Results Framework, African Commission Review on the Implementation of the WPS Agenda, Article 10 of the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) etc., to engender increased participation of women in peace and security. However, not much has been done to enforce compliance to foster the participation of women in PSO s specifically.⁸

Therefore, this article examines the participation of women in PSO s in Africa by interrogating the number of women African P/TCCs include in their deployments using Rwanda as a case study. Rwanda being one of the major T/PCCs in Africa provides a suitable context to discuss the inclusion of women in PSO s. By interrogating women's representation in Rwanda's PSO deployment, we can understand the extent to which African-led PSO s have become gender inclusive. The article examines the discourse on the evolution of PSO s in Africa while echoing the importance of women's participation for this evolution. It investigates if efforts have been made to increase women's participation in African-led PSO s. The article discusses how gender inclusive Rwanda's deployment to PSO s is and the effort it has taken to mainstream women in its deployment. It analyses the challenges that impede the gender inclusivity of African-led PSO s and implications. And it provides relevant recommendations on how African-led PSO s can engender increased representation of women. The article is divided into four main sections; section one examines the discourse on the evolution of African-led PSO s, section two focuses on the African Union and women's participation in PSO s, section three examines gender inclusion in Rwanda's deployment to PSO s, section four examines the issues and challenges facing women's participation in African-led PSO s and the final section concludes the article. The article focuses on the need to ensure gender-inclusiveness in African-led PSO s for their evolution to be holistic.

7 United Nations, 'Women, Peace, and Security', p. 1.

8 Institute of Security Studies, 'Gender Parity paramount in Peace Support Operations', (PSC Report, August 8, 2023) <https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/gender-parity-paramount-in-peace-support-operations>.

1.1 *Research Methodology*

The article adopts a qualitative research method to allow for an in-depth discussion on the gender-inclusiveness of African-led PSOs. The article made use of primary data extracted from the website of African Union, and Rwanda Ministry of Defence on the participation of women in African-led PSOs. It consolidated this data with other secondary sources such as journal articles, books and articles that have been written on women, peace, and security in Africa. The article made use of critical analytical framework to analyze the data collected on the participation of women in African-led PSOs. Rwanda was selected as a case study to contextualize the analysis on the extent to which the deployment of African P/TCCs are gender inclusive. In addition, Rwanda is a leading P/TCCs in Africa as well as African-led PSOs.⁹ Over the years, Rwanda has consolidated its position as a major player in terms of peace operations with the deployment of the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) and Rwanda Police Force (RPF) to conflict-afflicted regions.

1.2 *Theoretical Framework*

To guide the analysis on women's participation in PSOs, the article employs the radical feminist theory of peace and security. Broadly, radical feminism in peace and security seeks to challenge the root causes of gender inequality and patriarchy by attributing women's subordination to ingrained societal structures and institutions. It does this while calling for a gendered understanding of violence, patriarchy and militarism, the inclusion of women's voice, and redefining peace and security among other things. The works of numerous scholars engage with the gendered dimension of peace and security while calling for increased women's participation.¹⁰ Willet¹¹ argues that war and the military have been given a masculinized face which translates to the exclusion of women from these spaces and consequently peace mechanisms. The theory provides lens through which we can understand the lack of gender-inclusiveness in African-led PSOs. It allows us to spotlight hegemonic masculinity and restrictive patriarchal norms as some of the factors responsible for women's underrepresentation in PSOs.

9 Jessica Moody, 'How Rwanda became Africa's Policeman', (Foreign Policy, November 21, 2022) <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/11/21/how-rwanda-became-africas-policeman>.

10 See: Judy El-Bushra, 'Feminism, Gender, and Women's Peace Activism', *Development and Change*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2007, pp. 131–147. Catia Confortini, 'Feminist Contributions and Challenges to Peace Studies', (Oxford Research Encyclopedia, 2010).

11 Susan Willett, 'Introduction: Security Council Resolution 1325: Assessing the Impact on Women, Peace and Security', *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2010, pp. 142–158.

Furthermore, the radical feminist theory of peace advocates for more women to be included in PSO s to avert the perpetuation of gendered violence rooted in restrictive patriarchal norms. The radical feminist theory of peace advocates for the active participation of women in PSO s because their participation can add to the gender-responsiveness of the peace operations. The theory understands that creating peace is intersectional, active, and must place people most impacted by the issue at its core. This implies that all levels of peace operations must include women and ensure their active participation.¹² In particular, the increased participation of women as participants in PSO s is central to the radical feminist theory of peace, which is primarily concerned with the emancipation of women from the secondary or inferior status that has been ascribed to them due to gender inequality.¹³ By calling for women's participation in peace and security, the radical feminist theory helps us to rethink the agency of women during armed conflict to foster the inclusion of women in PSO s. The relevance of the theory for this research is its analysis on why women are often underrepresented in peace operations and its advocacy for the increased participation of women in PSO s.

2 Discourse on Evolution of Peace Support Operations in Africa

African-led PSO s have demonstrated that they are capable of leading relatively long-duration operations that have entailed some intense combat encounters.¹⁴ With their limited resources, African political and security groups have faced further challenges trying to fill the gap left by the UN Security Council's inactivity.¹⁵ African States are becoming more prepared to participate in African conflicts, in part as a reaction to perceived Western disinterest.¹⁶ Carvalho¹⁷ adds that "African PSO s have frequently been sent in when the

12 Jelena Vukoicic, 'Radical Feminism as a Discourse in the Theory of Conflict', *Sociological discourse*, vol. 3, no. 5, pp. 33–49.

13 Zainab Monisola Olaitan, 'Analysis of Women's Participation in Peacebuilding: A Case Study of Sierra Leone', (MA Dissertation, University of Pretoria, June 2020), pp. 1–95.

14 Mark Malan and Christopher Lord, 'Preface' in Mark Malan (eds.), *Boundaries of Peace Support Operations: The African Dimension*, (ISS Monograph 44, 2000), pp. 2–5.

15 Eric Berman and Katie Sams, *Peacekeeping in Africa: Capabilities and Culpabilities*, (United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, Geneva, UNDIR/2000/3), pp. 1–571.

16 Berman and Sams, *Peacekeeping in Africa: Capabilities and Culpabilities*.

17 Gustavo de Carvalho, 'The Future of Peace Operations is Africa, Demands Better Coordination', *IPI Global Observatory*, September 2020. <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2020/09/future-peace-operations-african-demands-better-coordination>, accessed on 02/05/2023.

international community has been unable or unwilling to act". In a way "African solutions to African challenges" has symbolized African aspirations to greater regional ownership as well as a reminder that an increasing number of African-led answers have been prompted by the selective scant response of the international community to conflicts in Africa. Although, most of the United Nations peace missions are often deployed to Africa, nonetheless, African (continental and regional) peace operations have increasingly stepped up to the plate in support of the Africa's peace and security initiatives.¹⁸ African-led missions frequently serve as the "first responders" to armed conflicts in Africa before the UN joins the operations.¹⁹ As a result, De Coning *et al.* attest that attempts at maintaining peace on the African continent have motivated the expansion of PSOs from traditional peacekeeping doctrines.²⁰

The African Union Peace, and Security Council (PSC) is the governing authority charged with peace operations. Apuuli adds that PSOs are measures that the PSC uses to mitigate armed conflicts on the continent. He further notes that the Council has the prerogative to "authorize the planning and deployment of peace support missions as well as lay down general guidelines for the conduct of missions, including the mandate of such missions, and undertake periodic reviews of these guidelines".²¹ The AU Commission Peace Support Operations Division is tasked with conducting and responding to PSO matters in Africa. Their responsibility stretches to planning, launching, overseeing, and liquidating all PSOs authorized by the AU policy organs which includes the PSC.²² Since 2003, eleven African Union-mandated PSOs have been deployed, some of them are; "the African Union Mission in Burundi (AMIB, 2003–2004), the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS, 2004–2007), the African Union Mission Support to the Elections in Comoros (AMISEC, 2006), the African Union Electoral and Security Assistance Mission to the Comoros (MAES, 2007), the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM,

18 De Carvalho, 'The future of peace operations is Africa', accessed on 02/05/2023.

19 Cedric de Coning, 'Peace enforcement in Africa: Doctrinal distinctions between the African Union and United Nations', *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2017, pp. 145–160. DOI: 10.1080/13523260.2017.1283108.

20 Cedric de Coning, Andrew Yaw Tchie, Anab O. Grand, 'Ad-hoc Security Initiatives, an African response to insecurity', *African Security Review*, vol. 31, no. 4, 2022, pp. 383–398. DOI: 10.1080/10246029.2022.2134810.

21 Kasaija P. Apuuli, 'The African Union and Peacekeeping in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities', *Vestnik RUDN*, vol. 20, no. 4, 2020, pp. 667–677.

22 African Union Commission, 'The Peace Support Operations Divisions: Silencing the Guns, Sustaining Peace', (AU PSOD Brochure, September 2016) <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/02-au-psod-brochure-23sep16.pdf>.

2007–present), and the African-led International Support Mission in Somalia (AMIS).²³

Tchie argues that the AU and the RECs were inspired to build Africa's capacity to deploy and conduct PSOs following the success of ECOWAS-led PSOs during the early 1990s.²⁴ This led to the 2003 creation of the African Standby Force (ASF) project. So far, three distinct African-led PSO type have since developed, they are "AU-led PSO, e.g., African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM); RECs-led missions e.g., the ECOWAS missions in Sierra Leone and Liberia; Coalition of states or coalitions of the willing operating inside, outside and across two RECs, e.g., the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF)". These types of African-led PSOs signify a continental, regional and multi-national response to armed conflicts in Africa.²⁵

African peace and security institutions are under a lot of pressure from very complex and dynamic conflict systems. New methods and cooperation models are emerging in response, to create a more tranquil and stable continent.²⁶ The African model of peace operations shows that the AU has employed its peace operations to stifle violent conflicts, defend governments and assist in stabilizing the security situation in the conflict affected regions.²⁷ The main objective of the AU peace operations is to contain violence and foster stability so that political solutions may be explored, not as stand-alone military solutions but as part of a wider political intervention.²⁸ With the intention of ending the war and restoring stability, all AU operations to date have been deployed in the midst of active hostilities. By preventing threats from using force for political ends, some sort of peace must be maintained. A strong feeling of accountability and camaraderie around a shared African identity

23 African Union, 'Peace and Security Council; Peace Support Operations', (African Union 2023) <https://au.int/en/psc>.

24 Andrew Yaw Tchie, 'African-Led Peace Support Operations in a declining period of new UN Peacekeeping Operations', *Global Governance*, vol. 29, 2023, pp. 230–244.

25 Andrew Yaw Tchie 'Generation three and a half peacekeeping: Understanding the evolutionary character of African-Led Peace Support Operations', *African Security Review*, 2023, doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2023.2237482.

26 Cedric de Coning, Linnea Gelot and John Karlsrud, 'Towards an African Model of Peace Operations' in Cedric de Coning, Linnea Gelot and John Karlsrud (eds.), *The Future of African Peace Operations: From the Janjaweed to Boko Haram* (London, Zed Books, 2016), pp. 1–19.

27 de Coning, Gelot and Karlsrud, 'Towards an African Model of Peace Operations', p. 12.

28 African Union, Communique of the 56th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, (December 2015).

and purpose permeates the AU peace support operations model.²⁹ Irrespective of the initial aim of these operations, African-led PSOs are almost exclusively focused on security, physical protection, and stability.³⁰ In reality, PSOs have become overly militarized and are quick to react to help protect peace. The non-military aspects of the ASF project, which uses a multidimensional PSO concept, receive little attention during operations and are instead primarily focused on hard security even though many African-led PSOs are modeled after the ASF.³¹ For a substantial majority of their expenses, AU peace efforts continue to be reliant on resources and assistance from external partners and organizations.³² Funding has been one of the factors restricting the full independence of AU's capacity to undertake peace support operations as they are often funded and supported by external actors. Although some of the funds come from the AU, African P/TCCs, RECs and private sector donations, most of the funds come from non-African partners. However, in the case of some RECs, like ECOWAS, they can financially fund their own missions due to community levies and other means.³³

2.1 *Why Women's Participation Is Important for the Evolution of PSOs in Africa*

Apart from challenges such as funding and over-militarization of African-led PSOs, another intrinsic obstacle that can affect this evolution is the lack of gender inclusion in these PSOs.³⁴ Considering the importance that women's participation has for peace operations in general, it is imperative that women are included. Their importance in peace operations has been argued to consolidate the operational effectiveness of peace operations and goes beyond the set mandate of the mission. For instance, Nagel *et al.* report that women peacekeepers frequently work as humanitarian relief workers or as front-line

29 Cedric de Coning, 'Peace Enforcement in Africa: Doctrinal distinctions between the African Union and United Nations', *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 38, no. 1. 2017, pp. 145–160.

30 de Coning, 'Peace Enforcement in Africa', p. 151.

31 Tchier, 'African-Led Peace Support Operations in a declining period of new UN Peacekeeping Operations', p. 238.

32 de Coning, Gerlot and Karlsrud, 'Towards an African Model of Peace Operations', p. 14.

33 de Coning, Gerlot and Karlsrud, 'Towards an African Model of Peace Operations', p. 14.

34 Institute for Security Studies, 'Gender parity paramount for peace support operations', 2023.

soldiers in peacekeeping operations.³⁵ Occasionally, they engage in more extensive tasks that go outside the purview of their missions. For instance, female peacekeepers serve as role models for women and girls in the local areas where they are stationed.

Furthermore, victims of sexual and gender-based violence felt more at ease reporting sexual harassment and assault to female peacekeepers than their male colleagues, such as in an IDP camp in Darfur.³⁶ When women in the host countries reported experiencing more harassment and assault to female peacekeepers, the operation commanders adjusted patrol routes and timetables to avoid certain places and times. These focused patrol shifts raised security and enhanced residents' sense of safety. Ryan asserts that since the deployment of female police units from Nigeria in 2007 to Liberia, there has been a decrease in cases of sexual and gender-based violence as well as local cooperation.³⁷ She adds that they often act as role models in their host communities for women and children to advocate for their right to participate in peace. Mission members in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) noted similar trends of increased female reporting to female peacekeepers, which led to local women's knowledge of influencing peace support operations' tactics.³⁸ Nortvedt argues that the case for female engagement in peace operations reduces instances of sexual violence by peacekeepers which aids the overall operational effectiveness. Adding that the idea of boosting women's participation in PSO s has frequently been associated with the claim that doing so enhances the mission's overall operational efficacy.³⁹ Recent contributions highlight the importance of women in peace operations and how participation of women in PSO s leads to better knowledge of conflict drivers.

The argument is that for the evolution of African-led PSO s to be holistic, gender inclusion must be prioritized, this is due to the benefits that women's participation has for overall mission efficacy. Hence, it is imperative that women's participation be mainstreamed in African-led PSO s.

35 Robert Nagel, Kate Fin, Julia Maenza, 'Gendered Impacts on Operational Effectiveness of UN Peace Operations', (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security, 2021) <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Gendered-Impacts-on-Operational-Effectiveness-of-UN-Peace-Operations.pdf>.

36 Nagel, Fin, Maenza, "Gendered Impacts on Operational Effectiveness of UN Peace Operations", p. 24.

37 Sarah Ryan, 'Women for Women: Female Peacekeepers in the DRC', (ReliefWeb, 26 April 2011) <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/women-women-female-peacekeepers-drc#:~:text=Currently%2C%20the%20Department%20of%20Peacekeeping,Samoan%20unit%20in%20East%20Timor>, accessed on 03/05/2023.

38 Ryan, 'Women for Women', accessed on 03/05/2023.

39 Jenny Nortvedt, 'Female Participation in Peacebuilding Efforts in Africa: A Review of Recent Academic Contributions', ACCORD Conflict and Resilience Monitor 2021, no. 1 on Gender, Peacebuilding, Women, Peace, and Security, accessed 02/05/2023.

3 African Union and Increasing Women's Participation in PSOs

The AU has taken steps to increase women's participation in peace operations in line with the WPS agenda of the UN. Some of these steps are, "the AU Commission Review, Implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in Africa, the Continental Results Framework, Monitoring and Reporting on the Implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in Africa (2018–2028), the Review Women, Peace, and Security – Implementing the Maputo Protocol in Africa (2016), the recent 10-year Review of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda of the AU Peace and Security Council (2020)".⁴⁰ Notably, the Continental Results Framework (CRF) was created to monitor and evaluate how the WPS Agenda is being implemented. By referring to the UNSCR 1325, the CRF requires member states to monitor and report on WPS commitments in a systematic and ongoing manner and seeks to hasten their fulfillment. For instance, under the CFR, Liberia reported that 27% of its 26 missions had female military observers, while Ghana stated that 17.8% of its military observers in different peace operations were female.⁴¹ However, the CFR does not focus on women in PSO specifically, as it lumps gender participation in peace and security together under the WPS agenda.

Additionally, the AU adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa in 2003. The Protocol is an important instrument that calls for increased women's participation in peacebuilding. Article 10 (1) of the protocol establishes that "women shall have the right to peaceful existence and the right to participate in the promotion and maintenance of peace". Article 10 (2) further provides that "states shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the increased participation of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding".⁴² It also gives African women the chance to be protected from human rights abuses that affect them while they are troops, civilians, or refugees during armed conflicts. Additionally, the Protocol affirms the right of women to peace and urges countries to guarantee that women are included in all facets of post-conflict rebuilding and rehabilitation planning, formulation, and implementation.

While we can acknowledge the numerous instruments highlighted above, it is important to note that they do not focus primarily on increasing women's

⁴⁰ Nortvedt, 'Female Participation in Peacebuilding Efforts in Africa', accessed on 02/05/2023.

⁴¹ African Union, 'Report on the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa', (AU Document 2020, 42544), accessed on 04/05/2023.

⁴² Christoff Heyns and Magnus Killander, *Compendium of Key Human Rights Documents of the African Union* (eds.), (Pretoria: Pretoria University Law Press, 2016).

participation in PSOs.⁴³ These instruments engage with the WPS Agenda and increasing women's participation in peace and security more broadly. Relatedly, the AU has made strides in promoting the acceptance of the WPS agenda and has urged for its implementation to guarantee that its policies and programs incorporate the WPS agenda's provisions. Nonetheless, this progress has mostly focused on developing policies rather than holding itself or its member states accountable. Member states are not instituting dedicated action plan to ensure that women take up a certain quota of their deployment to PSOs. These shortfalls exist even though the AU recognizes the necessity of incorporating the WPS Agenda into its efforts to create a peaceful and secure Africa.⁴⁴ There is need to direct policies towards increasing the number and participation of women in PSOs specifically.

4 Women in Rwanda's PSO Deployment

This section presents a case study analysis of women's participation in African-led PSOs. It spotlights Rwanda as a P/TCC to PSOs in Africa and its efforts at engendering women's inclusion.

In 2004, Rwanda sent its first 150 troops to Sudan as part of the African Union mission in Sudan (AMIS).⁴⁵ Due to its active deployment of troops to different peace missions in Africa, it has been ranked as one of the largest contributors along with South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopia etc.⁴⁶ The bulk of Rwanda's deployment is in the Central Africa Republic, Darfur, and South Sudan.⁴⁷ In 2021, Rwanda responded to a request made by the President of Mozambique to assist with quelling the growing terrorist agenda in the latter's country. As part of this effort, Rwanda deployed 1000-personnel to Mozambique to fight off the insurgents.⁴⁸ By February 2023, Rwanda's troop deployment had increased

43 Institute for Security Studies, 'Gender parity paramount for peace support operations', 2023.

44 African Union, 'Report on the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa', accessed on 04/05/2023.

45 Marco Jowell, 'Contributor Profile: Rwanda', International Peacekeeping Institute, April 2018. <https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/ipi-pub-ppp-rwanda.pdf>, accessed on 16/06/2023.

46 Segun Joshua and Faith Olanrewaju, 'The AU's Progress and Achievements in the Realm of Peace Security', *India Quarterly*, December 2017, pp. 454–471.

47 Jowell, 'Contributor Profile: Rwanda', p. 1.

48 Borges Nhamirre, 'Rwanda expands its protection of Mozambique's natural resources', (Institute for Security Studies, 1 February 2023) <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/rwanda-expands-its-protection-of-mozambiques-natural-resources>.

from 1000 to 2500, this mission is regarded as largely successful which has further strengthened Rwanda's status as a top P/TCC in Africa.

While we can appraise the numerous strides Rwanda is making in terms of its involvement in PSOs in Africa, there is need to question the number of women that are part of its deployments to assess the gender-inclusiveness of Rwanda's police and troops to PSOs. As part of its commitment to peace operations, Rwanda currently has over 5000 troops and police deployed across different African missions, out of this, women constitute less than 10 per cent.⁴⁹ The fact that women make up less than 10 per cent of Rwanda's deployment to PSOs consolidate the argument that women are underrepresented in PSOs. Importantly, when discussing gender inclusion in PSOs deployment, an unspoken challenge is the lack of gender disaggregated data on the number of troops deployed. For instance, Rwanda's deployment to Mozambique as of first quarter of 2023 only notes that there are 2500 troops, this data does not specify how many men and women make up the number. The unavailability of disaggregated data is detrimental for ensuring gender inclusivity of PSOs and the evolution of African-led PSOs. This is because without the publication of relevant data on the number of women and men in African P/TCCs, it becomes difficult to measure the progress being made with regards to women's inclusion in PSOs.

4.1 *Efforts Taken to Increase Women's Representation in Its PSO Deployment*

To increase the number of women in its security force, Rwanda instituted initiatives such as the creation of a gender desk to engender the inclusion of women in its defense force.⁵⁰ The gender desk fosters the mainstreaming of gender into the recruitment and operation of the army wherein women and young girls are engaged. The RDF through the gender desk introduced a gender program in 2007 to ensure that women are not left out of the institution and that the principles of equality and respect between/for men and women are adhered to. There was also provision for a gender budget in 2014 for the RDF within the ministry of Gender and Family Promotion and the gender

49 Official Website of Rwanda Ministry of Defence, 'Rwanda Defence Force and Peacekeeping', <https://www.mod.gov.rw/rdf/peacekeeping>, accessed on 15/06/2023.

50 Official Website of Rwanda Ministry of Defence, 'Gender Desk', https://www.mod.gov.rw/activities?tx_news_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&tx_news_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx_news_pi1%5Bnews%5D=22887&cHash=2623c61d3a83ca83d57b7c17a7863gdb accessed on 15/06/2023.

monitoring office to provide more opportunity to advocate for reform.⁵¹ These initiatives are gradually showing results, for instance, the number of women serving in the military increased from 241 in 2004 to 633 in 2014. Nonetheless, criticisms arose that the gender mainstreaming effort of the RDF was placed under the responsibility of a smaller number of male military elites rather than governmental institutions which affected the progress.⁵²

To implement the UN WPS Agenda, Rwanda instituted two National Action Plans (NAPs), the first one was launched in 2009 to ensure participation of women while the second was launched in 2018 to foster meaningful participation of women in peace and security.⁵³ However, there was no specified funding budget for the 2018 NAP which raised questions on how the plan will be actualized.⁵⁴ The provision of two NAPs for implementing the WPS agenda by Rwanda can be appraised while critiquing the lack of funding towards the actualization of the 2018 NAP. Without adequate funding towards implementing the NAP, the task of engaging women as participants through their recruitment into the security sector vis-à-vis their inclusion in PSO s deployment becomes limited. The goal of ensuring the representation of women in PSO deployment should not end at policy formulation, there is need for active implementation of the NAPs for the goal to be actualized.

Additionally, current strides to ensure gender parity in different sectors in Rwanda is yet to reflect in the security sector. As of 2023, Rwanda has only 21% of women in its police force and 4.6% women in its military, both numbers below 30%.⁵⁵ The low number of women in Rwanda's security forces can be attributed to lack of dedicated policy for enhancing women's representation in the security space. The consequence of this is that gender representation in its PSO deployment will reflect the low number of women in its security forces. There is need for holistic representation of women across all sectors rather than only focusing efforts on women's participation in the political system. Without the increased representation of women in the PSO s deployment of Rwanda, the need to ensure the visibility of women in the country's decision-making sphere becomes stunted.

51 Georgina Holmes, 'Gender and the Military in Post-Genocide Rwanda' in Elissa Bemporad and Joyce Warren (eds.), *Women and Genocide: Survivors, Victims, Perpetrators* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), pp. 223–249.

52 Holmes, 'Gender and the Military in Post-Genocide Rwanda', p. 237.

53 Diana Hojlund Madsen, 'Women, peace, and security in Rwanda – promises and pitfalls', (Nordic Africa Institute Policy Notes 2020:6) <https://reliefweb.int/report/rwanda/women-peace-and-security-rwanda-promises-and-pitfalls>.

54 Madsen, 'Women, peace and security in Rwanda', 2020.

55 Institute for Security Studies, 'Gender parity paramount in peace support operations', 2023.

The essence of spotlighting the different initiatives Rwanda has undertaken to mainstream women in its security force is to examine the efforts African P/TCCs are making to ensure women are included in their deployments to PSOs. Without the increased number and participation of women in their national armies and police force, it becomes difficult to have a gender-inclusive deployment to PSOs. Considering the significance that gender inclusion has for African-led PSOs, it is concerning that African P/TCCs are yet to mainstream gender into their deployments. It begs the question, why are women yet to be mainstreamed in the deployments of African P/TCCs to PSOs drawing from Rwanda. In engaging this question, the next section discusses issues and challenges surrounding lack of gender-inclusiveness of African P/TCCs PSO deployments.

5 Gender Inclusiveness of African-Led PSOs: Issues, Challenges, and Implication

Discussions on the evolution of African-led PSO are yet to prioritize the need for women's active participation in PSOs at both national and regional level. For instance, Alaga⁵⁶ states that "until 2007 when a presidential decree was passed to allow for their recruitment, women were not permitted to serve in the national military of Senegal. This gendered provision that limited women's ability to participate in the security force is one of the root causes of the low participation of women in peace operations. If a country is gatekeeping the number of women it can have in its army and police force, it translates to minimal female representation in its deployment to PSOs. Thereby making it difficult for women to participate and be included in peace support operations in Africa. Women are frequently drawn to participating in peace operations because of their experiences in armed conflicts as participants and victims.⁵⁷ However, they are typically barred from joining these institutions because these institutions have been masculinized.

The debates on women in peace and security frequently focus on the underrepresentation of women and their limited agency during armed conflict and peace process. The dominant theme of these debates is that women are underrepresented in peace and security.⁵⁸ Central to the explanation for this

56 Ecoma Alaga, 'Challenges for Women in Peacebuilding in West Africa', AISA Policy Brief, vol. 18, 2010.

57 Olaitan, 'Analysis of women's participation in peacebuilding', p. 20.

58 See: Olaitan, 'Analysis of women's participation in peacebuilding', p. 22. Laura Shepherd, 'Victims of Violence or Agents of Change? Representations of Women in UN Peacebuilding Discourse', *Peacebuilding*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2016, pp. 121–135.

underrepresentation is restrictive patriarchal and socio-cultural norms of most African societies.⁵⁹ For instance, Onyenwere claims that “culture is usually the justification wielded for the denial of women’s rights and the perpetuation of gender inequality in order to explain the unequal relationship between men and women in African civilizations”.⁶⁰ Garba asserts that “women are culturally discriminated against as being weak, unfit, and inferior while men are perceived as providers, strong, and superior in all aspects of peace operations”.⁶¹ These restrictive norms impede the extent to which women can be included in PSO s.

Furthermore, even in the case where women are included in these operations, they are likely to face sociocultural hindrances such as gender stereotypes, restrictive cultural attitudes. The advantages of including women in peace support operations do not translate into overall advancements for the WPS agenda or the eradication of socio-cultural attitudes. Nagel *et al.* report that women interviewed for a study on gendered impact on operational effectiveness stated that women peacekeepers were disproportionately restricted in their roles as they were stuck with jobs such as radio operators or analysts often because the contingent leadership declined to deploy women to a certain base patrol route on the justification that the base lacked the facilities to accommodate women.⁶² However, this justification reflects lack of gender responsiveness in peace operations as the needs of women peacekeepers are not considered priority when setting up base camp. This is part of the structural barriers that impede the inclusion of women in PSO s.

Additionally, men in these operations often demonstrate a gendered hierarchy in their views on the functions of uniformed men and women in PSO s. For instance, when asked about the possible effects of men and women wearing uniforms, one respondent said that “men have the most important part of the job”.⁶³ This exemplifies the idealization of the male warrior persona and emphasizes the danger of placing women in stereotypically gendered roles. It solidifies gendered disparities inherent within PSO s, restricting the positions and responsibilities that women can assume. Demonstrating that

59 See: Gladys K. Garba, ‘Building Women’s Capacity for Peacebuilding in Nigeria’, *Review of History and Political Science*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2016, pp. 31–46. Johsua Onyenwere, *Women and Governance: Case Study of Nigerian Women*, (Research Thesis: Talinn University of Technology, 2017).

60 Onyenwere, ‘Women and Governance’, p. 19.

61 Garba, ‘Building Women’s Capacity for Peacebuilding in Nigeria’, p. 37.

62 Nagel, Fin, Maenza, ‘Gendered Impacts on Operational Effectiveness of UN Peace Operations’, p. 27.

63 Nagel, Fin, Maenza, ‘Gendered Impacts on Operational Effectiveness of UN Peace Operations’, p. 27.

women peacekeepers may not always be able to bridge the socio-cultural barriers rooted in restrictive patriarchal attitudes that hinders their active participation. This problem justifies the premise of the radical feminist theory on the need to dismantle socio-cultural norms that hinder women from embodying their agency as participants in peace operations.

Specifically, on Rwanda, the dominance of men and the masculine brand of the RDF is one of the factors preventing women from being motivated to join just like other African countries where women are less likely to join the security force.⁶⁴ Although, Rwanda has gained an international reputation for its success in integrating women into political institutions at all levels, this has yet to manifest in its national army. Restrictive gender stereotypes are utilized to discourage women from entering the RDF out of concern that they would lose their prestige in society, and some of these negative ideas include that female soldiers are prostitutes or sexually promiscuous.⁶⁵ Consequently, women who have served in the military and are presently in retirement are seen unfavorably due to patriarchal attitudes.⁶⁶

The implication of women's underrepresentation for the evolution of African-led PSOs borders around issues of sustainability and legitimacy. Inadequate representation of all views and interests compromises the long-term sustainability of peace when women are not actively involved in peace operations.⁶⁷ The importance of including women in PSOs was reaffirmed during the 987th meeting of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) in 2021. The meeting re-iterated the need for the participation of women in peace and security and require that peace support operations adhere to AU and global frameworks for rights and equality. The long-term implication of underrepresentation of women from peace operations is not limited to the sustainability of peace sought as it has symbolic repercussions for the continent's fight against gender inequality.

6 Conclusion

Much needs to be done beyond policy formulation to engender women's inclusion in African-led PSOs. ISS⁶⁸ notes that "to guarantee that building

64 Holmes, 'Gender and the Military in Post-Genocide Rwanda', p. 240.

65 Holmes, 'Gender and the Military in Post-Genocide Rwanda', p. 241.

66 Holmes, Gender, and the Military in Post-Genocide Rwanda', p. 240.

67 United Nations, 'Women, Peace, and Security', p. 53.

68 Institute of Security of Studies, 'The African Union must recognize women's role in peacebuilding', PSC Report, 26 November 2021, <https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc>

and planning for sustainable peace is inclusive, the AU Peace and Security Architecture needs to properly clarify the role of women and their contributions to peace processes". For instance, the Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development report to the Peace and Security Council (PSC) only included the significance of women in maintaining peace without specifying how women can be better included.⁶⁹ The PSC should emphasize accomplishments and include more in-depth information on the application of gender-sensitive policies. It should also be stressed that when peace operations are implemented in a gender-blind manner, women are, at best, ignored and, at worst, excluded. Secondly, mandates should explicitly support gender equality, uphold the values of gender responsiveness and gender inclusiveness, make mention of the human rights framework, and stress the significance of tracking forward progress on these issues.⁷⁰ Mainstreaming of gender perspectives in the mandates of PSOs can be facilitated by specific references to gender problems in the mission statement. These references can also serve as performance indicators for the mission's commitment to gender equality.

The fight for gender equality in Africa does not happen at once, it takes gradual change in systems and different sectors, such as the peace and security sphere. To this end, this article investigated the extent to which peace support operations in Africa are inclusive of women. The article examined the gender inclusivity of deployments to PSOs by African P/TCCs using Rwanda. It employed the radical feminist theory to guide its analysis on why women should be included in PSOs. The article finds that African P/TCCs are not doing enough to include considerable number of women in their deployments. This is rooted in their lack of dedicated policy to increase the number of women in their security forces. It notes that without dedicated efforts to increase the number of women in their security forces, the deployment of African P/TCCs will continue to be devoid of women. The article submits that African countries have a long way ahead to ensure increased participation of women. And that the low numbers of women participating in PSOs does not bid well for the evolution of African-led PSOs.

Hence, the article recommends that the AU PSC must go beyond mere letters to ensure targeted measures are taken such as mandating member states to include a certain quota of women in the troops they deploy. It enjoins African P/TCCs to publish a gender disaggregated data of their deployment to different PSOs in Africa. This is to enable the visibility of the number of women that

-insights/the-african-union-must-recognise-womens-role-in-peacebuilding, accessed on 03/05/2023.

69 Institute of Security of Studies, 'The African Union must recognize women's role in peacebuilding', accessed on 03/05/2023.

70 United Nations, 'Women, Peace, and Security', p. 61.

are included in PSOs in Africa. The article recognizes that fostering increased representation of women in peace support operations will strengthen efforts towards a responsive African peace and security architecture while consolidating the legitimacy and sustainability of peace support operations.

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