Progress and Challenges in Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the African Union's Peace and Security Architecture

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Abstract

This article provides an initial overview of the African Union's progress and challenges in implementing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in its peace and security architecture. It reviews implementation in relation to representation, programming and in peacekeeping. The article contends that the WPS agenda has strong roots in Africa and that progress has been made in relation to the development of frameworks, policies and strategies. Representation of women in the architecture has improved but the AU still has a long way to go to see this through at programmatic level (for example in peace negotiations and peace support operations). The programmes and activities implemented also appear to be rather ad hoc and attempts at quick-fix measurable exercises. The article argues that the WPS agenda has been narrowed to focus on the inclusion of women into peace and security institutions and processes without a deeper reflection of what their participation may mean for legitimizing post-conflict patriarchal and militarized orders.

Résumé

Cet article fournit un aperçu des progrès initiaux réalisés par l'Union africaine et des défis rencontrés dans la mise en œuvre du programme Femmes, Paix et Sécurité (FPS) dans son architecture de paix et de sécurité. Il passe en revue cette mise en œuvre en matière de représentation, de programmation et de maintien de la paix. Le travail montre que le programme FPS est bien enraciné en Afrique et que des progrès ont été réalisés en ce qui concerne

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l'élaboration de cadres, de politiques et de stratégies. La représentation des femmes dans l'architecture s'est améliorée, mais l'UA a encore beaucoup de chemin à parcourir pour la hisser au niveau programmatique (par exemple dans les négociations de paix et les opérations de maintien de la paix). Les programmes et les activités mis en œuvre semblent surtout ponctuels, prenant la forme d'efforts quantifiables qui tentent de corriger hâtivement les problèmes. L'article souligne que le programme FPS a été réduit à l'inclusion des femmes dans les institutions et les processus de la paix et de la sécurité, sans une réflexion approfondie sur ce que leur participation pourrait signifier en légitimant les ordres patriarcaux et militarisés après le conflit.

Introduction

The African Union (AU) has committed itself to implementing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda into its peace and security structures and processes. This is apparent in the integration of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 into the AU's gender related frameworks, the appointment of a Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security and pronouncements by the organization in this regard and in its policies and practices. However, there is little evidence-based analysis of the implementation of the agenda in the African Union's Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and of progress and challenges in this regard. This article seeks to address this gap, particularly through a focus on representation, programming and gender-mainstreaming in the AU's peace support operations. The article begins by briefly outlining the WPS agenda and the AU's commitment to it before unpacking the progress and challenges of implementation.

The WPS agenda has been evolving over the last four decades. Feminist scholars and gender activists studying and/or working in conflict areas had long highlighted the need to focus on the roles played by men and women during conflict, the gender differential impact of violent conflict, the need to address the challenges of women and to increase their participation in peace and security structures and processes. These concerns found expression in policy documents such as The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (1985), the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the Windhoek Declaration and Namibia Plan of Action for Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations (2000). Momentum around these issues increased substantially with the adoption of UNSCR 1325, in October 2000, for this resolution placed gender concerns squarely onto the international and regional peace and security

agendas, drawing attention to both the role of women as victims of conflict and the need to include them as actors in peace processes (peace-making, peacekeeping, post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding).

UNSCR 1325 calls for: increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict; to appoint more women as special representatives and envoys; to increase the number and role of women in peace missions; to incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations; to support local women's peace initiatives to protect women and girls from gender-based violence (GBV); to end impunity and to ensure more gender-sensitive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes (UNSC S/RES/1325, 2000).[1] The subsequent UNSC resolutions on women, peace and security all attempt to bolster and give effect to the general principles in UNSCR 1325[2] and collectively have come to constitute the WPS agenda. It is a minimalist and largely state centric agenda that has largely become divorced from the feminist debates that gave rise to it (Hendricks 2016) (see critiques of the WPS agenda in, for example, Hudson 2010; Olonisakin and Okech 2011; Ellerby 2015; Olonisakin, Hendricks and Okech 2015). The aim of this article, however, is not to provide an in-depth conceptual and theoretical critique but to assess implementation of the WPS agenda by the AU.

The Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 underscores, amongst others, the following broad global achievements:

- substantive progress in the adoption of a comprehensive normative framework with regard to sexual violence in conflict;
- a Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict has been appointed by the UN Secretary General;
- monitoring and Reporting mechanisms on sexual violence are in place;
- fact-finding missions set up by the Human Rights Council increasingly have a mandate to investigate Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV);
- the International Community (IC) and national governments now understand the importance of national and communal healing;
- 27 per cent of the peace agreements signed, post the adoption of 1325, contain a reference to women;
- the number of senior leaders within the UN is on the rise;
- bilateral aid on gender equality to fragile states has quadrupled (UN Women 2015:13–14).

We also deduce from this study that there has not been sufficient translation of the changes at the institutional level (intergovernmental and governmental) into meaningful transformation of the everyday experiences of women in conflict and non-conflict situations, nor has there been a marked increase in women's participation in peace processes. For example, the Global Study further notes that there are few actual prosecutions for SGBV at national level; few women participate in peace negotiations (only 9 per cent of peace negotiators between 1992 and 2011 were women); women peacekeepers are still only at 3 per cent of the military troops deployed in UN peace missions, many of the National Action Plans (NAPS) on UNSCR 1325 have weak accountability mechanisms or inadequate budgets available for implementation and that support for the women's peace and security agenda is more at a rhetorical level (UN Women 2015). Moreover, the Global Study makes particular mention of a changing conflict environment in which the number of conflicts have reduced, but are more protracted and in which violent extremism and counter-terrorism pose new challenges for women (UN Women 2015). Since terrorism is most often indiscriminate of its victims, women are a substantial part of the civilian casualties. They have also been 'kidnapped, raped, traded among fighters and forced into marriages' (Mlambo-Ngcuka and Coomaraswamy 2015): the Chibok girls kidnapped by Boko Haram being a visible display of these threats. Yet, many women also willingly join these groups as combatants. There has not been sufficient focus on the gendered nature of terrorism in Africa and how intergovernmental organizations should deal with this aspect in their counter-terrorism strategies.

The WPS agenda has strong roots in Africa. It was the conflicts on this continent – and the targeting of women during these conflicts – that provided the impetus for advocacy for the international instruments that now exist on Women, Peace and Security. African gender activists, practitioners and policymakers played a key role in the formulation and adoption of the initial WPS frameworks. UNSCR 1325, for example, was adopted when Namibia was president of the Security Council and South Africa was a co-sponsor of the subsequent UNSC 1820 resolution.

In the immediate post-Cold War era many civil wars erupted in Africa. The shift from the Organisation of African Union (OAU) to the African Union (AU), in 2002, was in part to enable the organization to respond more effectively to the new peace and security challenges confronting many of the AU's member states. In this regard the AU adopted the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union in 2002, which gave effect to the formation of APSA. In

the period 2002 to 2011 there was indeed headway in terms of reducing the number of conflicts and associated fatalities in the continent. However, since 2011 we have seen a spike in the number of conflicts and fatalities, peaking in 2014, with fatalities reaching levels 'last seen during the final stages of the Cold War' (Cilliers 2015).

There are currently ten peace support operations in Africa, nine of which are under the auspices of the UN of which one is a joint AU/UN mission and one is led by the AU. These are the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The AU also provides assistance in other conflict zones, for example, the AU led Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA) and the AU's support for the Multi-National Joint Task Force against Boko Haram. Violent extremism is prevalent in several countries across the continent, for example, Somalia, Kenya, Libya, Tunisia, Nigeria, Chad, Algeria and Mali. There are also a host of low-intensity conflicts that continue to afflict the region, as seen in Mozambique, Angola, Lesotho, Burundi, Egypt and many other countries. Intra-state conflict and the concomitant need for conflict management is therefore still a large part of the focus of the African Union's Peace and Security Architecture.

Although violence against women is a world-wide phenomenon, occurring in both times of peace and war, it is particularly pronounced in conflict situations where women are more vulnerable. The UN Department of Information reported back in 2000 that nearly '90 percent of the current war casualties [were] civilians'; this was noted as being in sharp contrast to these being military personnel a century ago. Women and children constituted the vast majority of these civilian casualties. Nearly two decades later the situation has not changed.

The AU, through the adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol adopted in 2003), the Solemn Declaration of Gender Equality

in Africa (2004), the AU Gender Policy (2008), the Framework for Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development (2006), the Policy Framework for Security Sector Reform (2011) and AGENDA 2063 (2015), has explicitly embraced gender equality and gender mainstreaming, including in peace and security structures and processes, as normative and policy imperatives.

Article 10 of the Maputo Protocol, for example, states that 'women have a right to a peaceful existence and the right to participate in the promotion of peace' (AU 2003). It calls on state parties to take appropriate measures to ensure the participation of women in 'the structures and processes for conflict prevention, management and resolution at local, national regional continental and international levels' and 'in all aspects of planning formulation and implementation of post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation' as well as the need for the 'protection of civilians including women in armed conflict' (AU 2003). The Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality, too, notes the importance of implementing UNSCR 1325 as well as to 'appoint women as Special Envoys and Special Representatives of the AU' (AU 2004). The AU Commission (AU 2015, 2016, 2016b), through the Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, published two reports capturing some of the gender mainstreaming activities in this sphere and organizations like the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) and the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) have also produced a few articles on gender mainstreaming in APSA. However, given the vast amount of literature on the AU, APSA and its African Standby Force (ASF) there is comparatively little scholarly analysis on gender mainstreaming in the APSA.

This article is an initial assessment of the AU's implementation of the WPS agenda, reflecting on the inclusion of women into the AU's peace and security architecture and its associated peace processes and some of the assumptions underpinning the AU's gender mainstreaming endeavours. The article notes the progress and challenges of implementing the agenda and argues for the need for more critical reflection on what is being implemented and why the gaps between conceptualization, policy and implementation persist.

The African Union's Peace and Security Architecture

The Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council (adopted in 2002 and entered into force in December 2003) sets out the AU's agenda for peace and security and the mechanisms through which it will be achieved. The agenda is wide-ranging including conflict prevention, early warning and preventative diplomacy, peace-making, peacebuilding, the promotion of democratic practices, intervention and humanitarian action

and disaster management (AU 2010). The architecture consists of the Peace and Security Council (PSC), Panel of the Wise (PoW), Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), African Standby Force (ASF), Peace Fund (PF) and Military Staff Committee (MSC). The AU, however, also has a number of organs, departments, units and special envoys and representatives that deal with peace and security (for example, there is a Commissioner for Peace and Security and a Department of Peace and Security that has within it sub-units such as Peace Support Operations, Conflict Prevention and Early Warning, Post-conflict Reconstruction and a Mediation Support Unit).

In 2010 the AU's Department of Peace and Security conducted an assessment of APSA. Some of the key findings of this report related to the lack of co-ordination between the APSA components and the need for improved governance of security forces through Security Sector Reform (SSR) measures (AU 2010). The rising tide of terrorism, piracy, disaster management, post-conflict reconstruction and broader governance issues were identified as challenges that were not adequately addressed by the APSA. Importantly, the assessment emphasized that gender was largely an 'add-on' of the existing programmes and therefore 'the need to ensure that gender is mainstreamed into all the APSA components at continental and regional levels. Although there is a commitment to do so on paper, the current staffing level of some of the APSA components is male dominated' (AU 2010: 11). That gender was then (2010) largely an 'add-on' and that APSA was 'male dominated' is not a surprise – most peace and security architectures are. However, given the attention to WPS over the last sixteen years, what has the AU been doing in relation to gender mainstreaming in peace and security and what has it achieved?

As outlined above, and as many have pointed out, the AU has done well in terms of a setting the normative framework for gender, peace and security on the continent (Abdullah 2016; Hendricks 2016; Hudson 2016). But, how has it fared in terms of the representation of women in peace and security structures and processes, protecting women, as well as the broader goals of transforming gender relations, promoting gender equality and creating more durable forms of peace and security (which we assume the inclusion of women would contribute to)? Including women, though key for parity, is not the end goal: transforming gender relations and creating peace and security for all is what is being sought.

On Representation

At the AU Summit in Durban in 2002, the Heads of State and Government unanimously adopted a gender parity principle in which at

least one Commissioner from each region would be a woman. The African Union Commission (AUC) adhered to this principle in its staffing of a Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and eight Commissioners for the previous administration (a new Chairperson and Commissioners were elected in January 2017). In 2012 the first woman, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, was appointed as the AUC Chairperson in a very competitive process. She, however, did not avail herself for a second term as she is campaigning to be the next president of South Africa. Of the eight Commissioners during her tenure (2012–16), four were women. Although the staff-complement in the Office of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson and the AUC, as a whole, did not reach gender parity under her administration, there was a discernible attempt to employ more women into key positions such as Chief of Staff, Deputy Chief of Staff, Directors, Heads of Divisions and as Special Representatives.

The current administration was elected in 2017 and is now headed by the Chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahammat of Chad, and the Deputy Chairperson, Kwasi Quartey of Ghana. Although they are both men they have appointed an equal number of men and women as Commissioners, i.e. four men (for Peace and Security, Trade and Industry, Human Resources, Economic Affairs) and four women (who are in the Social Affairs, Political Affairs, Rural Economy and Infrastructure and Energy portfolios). They have also listed women's empowerment and their inclusion in peace processes as one of their six key priority areas. The AU has yet to appoint a woman in the important peace and security positions, i.e. as Commissioner for Peace and Security, as Special Advisor for Defence and Security or as Head of the Department of Peace and Security. These are the strategic decision-making positions in the APSA for influencing policy development and implementation.

The PoW consists of five members, three of whom are women (Luisa Dioga, Specioza Wandira Kazibwe and Albina Assis). Of the thirty-one former and current chairs of the AU PSC eight have been women (23 per cent).[3] The PSC has fifteen members (currently South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Chad, Uganda, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Guinea, Niger, Libya, Algeria, Rwanda, Kenya, Zambia) and the latter three of these countries are represented by women. Of the Special Representatives, Special Envoys and Heads of Missions/Country Offices (who are usually assigned to conflict situations), the overwhelming majority remain men though there was concerted effort during Dlamini-Zuma's tenure to bring women in: Special Envoys (ten of the eleven are men), Representatives (seven out of nine are men) and Heads of Missions (seven out of eleven are men) (AUC 2016: 35).[4]

The Peace and Security Department is the largest department at the AUC. Although they registered a 30 per cent female representation in 2011, the majority of the women working there at the time were support staff (AUC 2013). I was unable to get more recent data, but it is unlikely that this would have changed substantially.

The number of women in a particular institution is not a sufficient marker for gender equality but representation of women in the decision-making structures of the APSA is important in order to advocate for the necessary changes in the structure and functioning of the organization; gender parity is an established principle of the AU: the APSA is not excluded from this principle. There is, as the above attests, an effort to have women represented in the AUC and in the APSA though much more determination is needed in this regard if they are to achieve parity throughout the organization. The test for this should start right at the helm, with the Heads of State, and national cabinets and parliaments, for they are the decision makers at the African Union. To date, Africa has only had nine women as Heads of State, the majority of them in an acting capacity, with only two elected and still currently serving in this capacity, namely Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Ameenah Gurib-Fakim. Only Rwanda has succeeded in reaching parity for women's representation in government, whilst the average for the continent, according to the AU's Gender Scorecard, is 22.4 per cent (AUC 2015).

On Implementation of the WPS Agenda

Dr Dlamini-Zuma's administration was instrumental in implementing the WPS agenda at the AUC, and particularly within APSA. In January 2014 she appointed a Special Envoy on Women Peace and Security, Ms Benita Diop, the Founder and President of Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), based in Senegal, with a specific mandate to 'ensure that the voices of women and the vulnerable are heard much more clearly in peace-building and in conflict resolution' (AUC 2015:7). This was an important initiative that has paid some dividend for we have since seen concrete movement on the WPS agenda at the AU. Ms Diop stated: 'my key message has been and remains Action! Action! Action! Accordingly my work has been geared towards galvanising actions to bring women's voices, experiences and expertise to the table of peace processes with the vision to silence the guns by 2020' (AUC 2015:11–12). Since her appointment, Ms Diop and her team (they are currently three in the office) have been on many 'solidarity missions' to conflict and post-conflict countries on the continent, they play a key role in advocacy for the inclusion of women in peace processes, and for initiating networks, projects and training on the continent (for example, the

Network of Reporters on Women, Peace and Security, the African Women's Mediator's network and training of women mediators, IGAD Women's Peace Forum, South Sudan National Women's Peace Platform, Regional Platform for Women of the Sahel and training on electoral observation and dispute mediation for forty women leaders) (see AU Executive Council 2017).

The Office of the Special Envoy on Women Peace and Security was tasked by the AU PSC to develop a 'Continental Results Framework to monitor the implementation by AU Member States and other relevant stakeholders of the various instruments and other commitments on women, peace and security in Africa' (AUC 2016: 8). At the AU Summit in June 2015 Heads of State also resolved to 'develop, implement and report on National and Regional Action Plans on UNSCR 1325' (ibid.) and to develop a gender scorecard to assist with the tracking of implementation. Although some of these reporting tools are still in the process of being developed and implemented they do represent a significant shift in terms of ensuring transparency and accountability for implementing agreed frameworks on women, peace and security. Noteworthy though is that the myriad of monitoring and evaluation templates being produced must not be an end in themselves or be seen as the panacea for effective implementation, i.e., spending most of the resources and energy on developing quick end products in tick-box exercises, rather than on figuring out ways to move beyond the hurdles currently delaying implementation.

To date, there are only nineteen African countries (thirteen of which are in West Africa) and two regional organizations, IGAD and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that have adopted National or Regional Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security (SADC is in the process of adopting one). The process of developing these plans galvanise governments and civil society towards collectively identifying and strategizing on the key challenges, but the plans have key challenges around conceptualization and implementation and have therefore rarely produced the desired outcomes of more gender representative and gender responsive peace and security structures and processes.

Furthermore, the AU declared 2010–20 as the 'African Women's Decade', devoted two of its annual themes to gender issues, namely 2015 as the 'Year of Women's Empowerment and Development Towards Agenda 2063' and 2016 as the 'Year of Human Rights with particular focus on the Rights of Women'. It also has a Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women (currently Ms Soyata Maiga). Since 2010 the PSC has also held seven Annual Open Sessions on Women and Children in Armed Conflict as part

of the 'Livingstone Formula' (AUC 2016: 8). These sessions have focused on highlighting the plight of women and children in conflict situations in Africa to members of the PSC.

In response to the APSA assessment of 2010, the Peace and Security Department adopted a Gender, Peace and Security Programme (GPSP) (2015–20). The programme 'aims at mainstreaming gender in all programmes of peace and security including Post-conflict and Reconstruction through collaboration with Regional Economic Communities and regional civil society platforms, to develop and implement continental and regional strategies for the participation of women in Peace and Security' (AU Peace and Security Council 2017) and replaces the Roadmap for Gender Mainstreaming (2011–13). The core components of the programme are:

1. enhancing the capacities of African Institutions Working in the Areas of Peace and Security and Human Rights to Mainstream Gender into the Continental Peace and Security Agenda – the focus is on improving the capacity and capability of the military to prevent sexual violence;

2. strengthening partnerships and promoting research and dialogue on gender peace and security;

3. strengthening women's role in peace and security in Africa;

4. preventing and responding to women, men and children's vulnerabilities in times of conflict and post-conflict situations and ending impunity (AUC Department of Peace and Security, Gender Peace and Security Programme 2015–20).

This programme – including the earlier 2011–13 programme – was largely funded by the United Kingdom (UK), who also provided support for staffing to carry out the programme (an international senior consultant, local junior programme officer and a communication officer to support the Special Envoy on WPS's office). An assessment of the implementation of the programmes noted the following activities which had been undertaken:

• support for the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), in December 2014, to cover facilitator fees for a 'training targeting troop and police contributing countries on the use of forensics as a tool to fight impunity for crimes of sexual violence' and an assessment of this exercise in December 2015 as well as a symposium on gender access to justice and fighting impunity for sexual violence in July 2016;

• AUC participation in the 60th sessions of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (March 2016);

- a pilot project in partnership with Medécin d'Afrique in the Central African Republic (CAR) which focused on SGBV (providing medical and psycho-social care to victims, trauma healing, support to set up basic health infrastructure and capacity building of national actors in community policing and investigating sexual violence);
- a study visit of a delegation from CAR to Rwanda to learn how to investigate crimes of sexual violence;
- economic empowerment support to victims of SGBV in North Kivu (support of school supplies for ten children borne as a result of rape and skills development training for twenty women);
- educational campaigns conducted by NGOs/CBOs on SGBV in Mali and Somalia;
- support for AU liaison office in Madagascar for implementing sixteen days of activism against SGBV and support for a seminar on SSR and the integration of gender in DDR and SSR frameworks in October 2015 (unpublished narrative report by the UK on the implementation of the GPSP activities 2014–16).

From the above we can see that much of the work to date seems rather ad hoc, limited in scope, overly concentrated on SGBV, training and conferences. These are also the easiest ways to illustrate and measure the implementation taking place. It does not however tell us anything about the quality of the interventions and their actual transformational impact. It is clear that the programme is entirely donor reliant, limited in resource capacity and has weak monitoring. In short the implementation does not live up to the bold objectives of the programme.

The evidence from the Global Study on Implementing UNSCR 1325 (2015) indicates that countries and intergovernmental organizations tend to fair reasonably well at developing and adopting laws, polices and frameworks relating to gender equality and the prevention of SGBV and on training in this regard. The frameworks and training are, however, not a sufficient deterrence to protect women in conflict and non-conflict situations from the scourge of SGBV (continued reports of SGBV in conflict countries such as the DRC and South Sudan and high prevalence rates in non-conflict countries, e,g. South Africa, attest to this), or to lead to the actual inclusion of women in peace and security structures and processes.

The data emanating from Africa on women's participation in peace-making also tend to verify the Global Study's findings. For example, despite the advocacy, frameworks and the training of women mediators, progress has been slow in terms of women's representation in peace-making processes.

In the peace-making processes in Africa from 1992 to 2011 we note that women were only signatories in the DRC (5 per cent); lead mediators in DRC North Kivu and South Kivu talks (20 per cent respectively) and Kenya (33 per cent); women were part of negotiating teams in Burundi (2 per cent), DRC (12 per cent), Dafur (8 per cent), Uganda (9 per cent) and Kenya (25 per cent) (AUC 2016: 20). More recently in the Mali peace process in 2015, eleven women participated (three from government and eight from civil society), whilst in South Sudan, where the process is still underway, three of the ten Sudanese Peoples Liberation Movement – in Opposition and three members of the government's delegation are women (AUC 2016: 21). Women seem to have remained the interlocutors for peace-making predominantly at a local level and are marginalized from formal peace-building processes, despite the loud rhetoric about the need to include women at formal peace tables and the AU's role in leading on many of these peace initiatives. There is however an improvement in the number of peace agreements mentioning the need for women's inclusion (usually a quota for representation in parliament) in transitionary arrangements.

There are now many initiatives across the continent training women to become mediators (for example, by the AU, ACCORD and by the Department of International Relations and Cooperation in South Africa). It is evident that being trained as a mediator or negotiator is not a guarantee to be brought into a mediation process. One must be high ranking in government, political parties, rebel groups, intergovernmental organisztion, etc. to be called for these processes. It would also surely have more impact for the AU and RECs to insist that mediators deployed by them ensure that their teams and the parties brought to the negotiating table be gender representative and meaningfully include gender issues as part of the discussion items to be agreed upon.

Peace Support Operations and the WPS Agenda

In 2003 the AU agreed to the establishment of an African Stand by Force that would provide rapid deployment capability and capacity for peace support operations 'including preventative deployment, swift intervention, classical peacekeeping and peacebuilding' (Neethling 2009: 14). Regional Economic Communities such as ECOWAS, Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of Central African States (CEMAC) had experience with deploying peacekeepers in conflicts in their sub-regions prior to the formation of the ASF (Cilliers and Gnanguenon 2015).

The ASF consists of five regional brigades (3,000–4,000 troops) a planning element based at AU headquarters and state level contributing countries (Williams 2011). Since 2003 the AU has deployed in Burundi (VIP protection, peacebuilding); Comoros (electoral monitoring and peace enforcement); Sudan (peacekeeping/civilian protection/peacebuilding), and Somalia (peace enforcement). The ASF has, however, struggled to become fully operational and many have listed the numerous challenges the ASF has experienced in relation to funding, capacity (e.g. forming the brigades, mobilizing soldiers for rapid deployment and equipment), subsidiarity, and so forth. Cilliers and Gnanguenon note that 'in the wake of events in Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and the Central African Republic (CAR), when Africa had to rely on external intervention, the 21st Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly decided on May 26 and 27, 2013 to create the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACRIC)' (Cilliers and Gnanguenon 2015:12). ACRIC will likely face the same challenges as the ASF.

A key aspect of UNSCR 1325 is mainstreaming gender in peacekeeping. This section will assess the AU's accomplishments and challenges in relation to gender and peace support operations in its two current missions, AMISOM and UNAMID.

As previously mentioned, in relation to peace support operations, the AU has developed a roster (for civilian women), a Gender Training Manual for AU Peace Support Operations as well as a Draft Code of Conduct for the Protection of Civilians in Peace Operations and a Draft Policy on Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. It is not clear to what extent these are being employed in the missions: the obvious reason is because they have been in draft form for quite some time and the Gender Training Manual (a rushed, ill thought through manual) is far too general to be meaningfully utilized to train AU peacekeepers for the contexts they are engaged in (and there is a UN Handbook on Multi-dimensional Peacekeeping Operations and Guidelines for Integrating a Gender Perspective into Peacebuilding which is widely used).

African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)

With the collapse of Siad Barre's regime and concomitantly the Somali state in 1992, many international actors tried to play a role in bringing about peace to what has been viewed as an intractable conflict. In their endeavour to recreate the state the international community has held a vast number of peace negotiations and conferences and sent in and withdrew troops after suffering major setbacks (e.g. the US). In January 2007 the AU took a decision to deploy to Mogadishu, receiving UNSCR authorisation after the

fact. The AU was well aware that it lacked the necessary capacity and that the environment was not conducive to peacekeeping. In trying to live up to its responsibility to provide security, however, it decided to deploy a peace mission for six months in order to support a national reconciliation congress as well as to provide protection to the Transitional Federal Institutions.[5] Ten years later, the AU is still in Somalia and it has turned out to be its largest peace support operation. It has not been a conventional peacekeeping mission, but more of a peace enforcement mission given persistent violent extremism perpetrated by Al Shabaab. In March 2007 the AU deployed to Mogadishu with 1,650 troops from Uganda and by 2012 the mission had grown to 18,000 personnel (Burton and Williams 2014: 44). In 2013 the AU authorised a force component to a maximum of 22,126 uniformed personnel.[6] The current troop contributing countries are Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, whilst Ghana, Kenya Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Uganda contribute police.

Table 1: Troop and Police Contributing Countries in AMISOM[7]

Country	Number of troops in 2016	Number of police in 2016	Percentage (%) of females in 2015
Uganda	6,223	402	2.57
Burundi	5,432		1.4
Kenya	3,664	27	0.08
Sierra Leone	850	47	
Ethiopia	4,395		2.9
Djibouti	960		0.7
Ghana		56	
Nigeria		140	

As is to be expected, given the generally low representation of women peacekeepers in most peace support operations, AMISOM does not meet the anticipated 10 per cent of female troops from contributing countries or 20 per cent female police, the goal for UN peacekeeping. It is very far from its own parity principle: the percentage of women uniformed personnel in AMISOM being below 3 per cent. Few countries are able to meet this challenge given low levels of women in the military to begin with and the conditions that peacekeepers are being deployed into, i.e., peace enforcement in hostile terrains for many months without adequate facilities for women. South Africa is one of the top contributors in terms of the number of women it deploys (around 15–20 per cent of its contingents), achieved through the active recruitment of women (30 per cent of the South

African National Defence Force are women) and because of a purposeful agenda to deploy women as peacekeepers. The AU, like the UN – desperate as they are for countries to contribute peacekeepers – has not exercised due diligence in ensuring that troop and police contributing states recruit, train and deploy more women as part of their contingents to live up to their own norms of including women into peace support operations. This has not been a priority area for AMISOM. Years later, women peacekeepers still complain about basic challenges such as access to adequate ablution facilities and sanitary ware.

The current mission mandate or strategic objectives and tasks of AMISOM are to:

- reduce the threat posed by Al Shabaab and other armed opposition groups;
- provide security in order to enable the political process at all levels as well as the stabilization efforts, reconciliation and peacebuilding in Somalia;
- enable the gradual handing over of the security responsibilities from AMISOM to the Somali security forces contingent;
- continue to conduct offensive operations against Al Shabaab and other armed groupings;
- maintain a presence in the sectors set out in the AMISON Concept of Operations in order to establish conditions for effective and legitimate governance across Somalia in coordination with the Somalia security forces;
- assist with the free movement safe passage and protection of all those involved with the peace and reconciliation process in Somalia and ensure the security of the electoral process in Somalia as a key requirement;
- secure key supply routes including to areas recovered from Al Shabaab in particular those essential to improving the humanitarian situation;
- conduct joint operations with the Somali security forces;
- contribute to the creation of the necessary security conditions for the provisions of humanitarian assistance;
- engage with communities in recovered areas, and promote understanding between AMISOM and local populations which will allow for longer term stabilization by the UN Country Team and other actors;
- provide and assist protection to the Somali authorities;
- protect its personnel, facilities installations equipment and mission and to ensure the security and freedom of movement of its personnel;

- receive on a transitory basis, defectors, as appropriate and in coordination with the United Nations.[8]

As we can see from the above, AMISOM does not have specific gender-related mandate nor is its mandate gender-sensitive or gender-responsive. It tried, after the fact, to correct this through the deployment of a gender officer as part of the civilian component in 2012, by adopting a gender mainstreaming strategy and by training peacekeepers on gender. The Deputy Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson for Somalia, Lydia Wanyoto, stated that 'The African Union remains highly committed to taking concrete actions in implementing the African Union Gender Policy and ensure the advancement and the protection of women rights, including Somali women and girls'.[9]

However, reports of sexual abuse by AMISOM soldiers indicate that there is a lot more sensitization and implementation and enforcement of agreed to policies that needs to happen in AMISOM. Human Rights Watch reported on the predatory behaviour of some of the peacekeepers deployed to protect civilians, predominantly fingering Ugandan and Burundian peacekeepers in the mission. Their article notes:

> Members of the African Union Forces, making use of Somali intermediaries, have employed a range of tactics to get private access to Somali women and then abuse them. Some AMISOM soldiers have used humanitarian assistance, provided by the mission to coerce vulnerable women and girls into sexual activity. … Some of the women who were raped said that the soldiers gave them food or money afterwards in an apparent attempt to frame the assault as transactional sex or discourage them from filing a complaint or seeking redress. The women and girls exploited by soldiers are entering into the AMISOM camps through official and guarded gates and into areas that are in theory protected zones…. Sexual exploitation has also taken place within official AMISOM housing…. These practices all point toward the exploitation and abuse being organised and even tolerated by senior officials (Human Rights Watch 2014).

If the AU is not able to deal effectively with sexual abuse by its peacekeepers, it will increasingly lose credibility. The type of training provided to peacekeepers for both UN and AU missions is not sufficient to change long held attitudes about gender and behaviour toward women. Much more work needs to be done in terms of behavioural change, but more importantly in terms of enforcing the 'zero tolerance' policy. The UN has adopted a new regulation that sends the entire country's contingent home if their peacekeepers are found guilty of sexual abuse. The AU needs to follow suit.

For years there had been only one gender officer, Ms Mane Ahmed, in the Gender Unit. She had spent a great deal of her time working with women in Somalia developing a national gender policy and training Somali police on gender-based violence. However, one woman to work internally with more than 18,000 peacekeepers and externally with a whole country was a non-starter. The AU now has a new gender officer, Major Bupe Chanda, who has increased human resources in the form of five gender focal point persons to work in the five sectors in Somalia (Reliefweb 2017). This, too, though an improvement, seems insufficient for the task at hand. Resource distribution is a good indicator of the seriousness of an issue for an organization or country and therefore is telling about the commitment of the AU to the WPS agenda.

It is often easier for gender advisors and/or officers to work with women's organizations in these conflict countries than to work within the mission itself. They are usually marginalized and working on the periphery internally, hence they spend most of their time working externally negating a very key aspect of their deployment, i.e., gender mainstreaming within the mission itself. In contexts of violent extremism, such as Somalia, the work of gender officers becomes increasingly marginalized. Gender is deemed as a 'soft issue' for a later date as the seemingly pressing 'hard core' security concerns take priority, i.e., a nice to have versus life and death narrative that is advanced to rationalize priority setting.

United Nations Mission in Dafur (UNAMID)

The conflict in Darfur started in 2003 when the Sudan Liberation Movement/ Army (SLM/A) and the Justice Equality Movement (JEM) rebelled against the government of Sudan (International Refugee Rights Committee 2016). The government of Sudan, primarily through the use of militia like the Janjaweed, retaliated beginning a war that has lasted nearly fourteen years with civilians being the 'primary targets of the attack and villages were burned, people killed, women raped with the apparent aim of driving people off the land' (International Refugee Rights Committee 2016: 7). Large scale internal displacement, food insecurity, sexual and gender-based violence and low level conflicts continue to afflict this region of Sudan despite the signing of three peace agreements and the deployment of a peacekeeping force first by the AU (AMIS) then jointly by the AU and UN (UNAMID).

The African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) was deployed in 2004 after the signing of the first peace agreement in Chad. This mission faced serious capacity constraints, with only 7,000 peacekeepers being deployed to a vast region in which there was once again no peace to keep and in which it did not

have sufficient financial resources and equipment to meet the challenges. The AU was eager for the UN to step in. However, it was only after the signing of a second peace agreement, the Darfur Peace Agreement of May 2006, that the UN decided to augment the AU's capacity through an unprecedented joint AU/UN peacekeeping operation in 2007, re-hatted as the United Nations – African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). The authorisation was for a force component of 25,987 later reduced to 23,743, which included a civilian component of 4,495 peacekeepers.[10] The deployment, as of June 2016, was 11,253 uniformed personnel[11] at a cost of US$ 109,2530,200 for 2015–16.[12] The female uniformed personnel averaged at about 22 per cent for police, 4 per cent for troops and 4 per cent for experts on mission,[13] again a far cry from the parity principle the AU subscribes to.

UNAMID's mandate post the signing of the Doha Peace Agreement in 2011 is to:

- protect civilians, without prejudice to the responsibility of the Government of Sudan;
- facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance by UN agencies and other aid actors and the safety and security of humanitarian personnel;
- mediate between the Government of Sudan and non-signatory armed movements on the basis of the Doha document for Peace in Darfur;
- support the mediation of community conflict, including through measures to address its root causes, in conjunction with the UN country team.[14]

Once again there is no explicit reference to gender or women in the mandate. This has to be largely inferred from the protection of civilians within the mandate and from the UNSC resolutions on Women, Peace and Security.

UNAMID had a Gender Advisor Unit – authorised until June 2017 – which was responsible for facilitating gender mainstreaming activities, implementing gender-related capacity building activities and promoting gender awareness (UN Office of Internal Oversight Services 2015). This unit was far better staffed than its counterpart, AMISOM, with twenty-three posts (four international staff, three UN volunteers, six national professional officers and ten national staff) and a budget of US$ 1.4 million (UNOIOS 2015).

UNAMID's website clearly lists the mission, vision, goals and strategies of the gender unit. The goals are a mix of promoting gender mainstreaming in mission operations (gender responsiveness of senior-management, promotion of women's rights in the work plans of UNAMID, training

for staff), responding to gender-based violence and promoting women's participation (in peace processes, in transitionary arrangements, political decision-making, and in economic development). This is a tall order for any gender unit. The unit notes that it facilitated 'the establishment of many mechanisms on the ground including Women Legislative Caucuses, GBV States Committees, 1325 Committees in the five Darfur States and maintained collaboration with states, governments and civil society organizations and women led organizations in Darfur'.[15] The UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (UNOIOS) audit report of the Gender advisory programme noted that UNAMID had drafted a gender mainstreaming strategy and delivered train the trainer sessions to 243 military personnel on gender matters in 2014. The report recommended that the unit conduct a base line study against which it could measure progress (the unit noted it did not have the required expertise or funds to do this). Furthermore, UNOIOS (2015) highlighted that there was no plan to implement the gender mainstreaming strategy, nor had the unit been providing technical advice to senior management in the mission on gender mainstreaming and that many senior managers had not attended the gender induction training. The report also stated that UNAMID management 'did not prioritize this activity because of inadequate mission-specific procedures on gender mainstreaming'. Because of the location of the gender unit as part of the Humanitarian Protection Strategy Coordination Division, the unit 'did not have direct access to senior management to promote effective gender mainstreaming' (UNOIOS: 2015: 3).

This speaks to the marginalization of gender units in these missions and, as previously highlighted in AMISOM, the concentration of their work on civil society organizations. If the purpose of gender units and gender mainstreaming strategies are to provide enhanced gender responsive peacekeeping by the peacekeepers themselves, then they do not do well on this score. They fair far better in assisting women's groups to mobilize for their rights within societies. But, if this is their main function, is the peace operation the place for the gender unit? Are they not duplicating the work of other UN and AU agencies tasked with development and political affairs? A critical rethink on the role of these gender units seems necessary.

Conclusion: Closing the Gaps in the AU's Implementation of the WPS Agenda

This article has highlighted the AU's frameworks, policies and practices in relation to implementing the WPS agenda. The normative frameworks advocating for gender equality and for the implementation of UNSCR

1325 are in place, but there remains a huge gap in terms of achieving the desired outcomes of these frameworks. There appears to be a number of reasons that account for this gap.

The first relates to the narrowing of the WPS agenda to an inclusion of women and an overwhelmingly dominant focus on SGBV. This has led to the inclusion of women without fundamentally destabilizing the gendered power relations within the structures or fundamentally altering how these structures function and respond in conflict situations. It has also essentially limited the rationale for women's inclusion and the focus of their work to predominantly one issue: SGBV. The representation of women in these structures is important but not sufficient to alter entrenched practices and behaviour. SGBV is a scourge that must be tackled but it is not the only impact of conflict on women, nor should it be the dominant lens through which the WPS agenda is cast. At best this then leads to the remedial efforts that are undertaken in the rather ad hoc forms that are discussed above.

More disconcertingly would be the potential for the entry of women into current peace processes to legitimize processes that are increasingly deemed flawed. For example, although the intention to get more women onto peace tables is informed by the need for women's interests and concerns to be reflected in the peace agreements that are forged, these spaces are increasingly in need of more critical introspection. Current peace processes are 'largely designed to settle disputes between men with the ability to do harm' (Hendricks 2016) and our entering of these spaces legitimates the processes of 'bigmanity' (Utas 2012), rather than forging 'sustainable peace'. There must be more innovative thinking of alternative gender sensitive ways of creating peace at all levels (local, national, regional, continental and global) and to cease being limited by the forms of yesteryear that are no longer able to address the multi-faceted complex nature of our current conflicts. This becomes all the more urgent in spaces afflicted by terrorism, as the retort by governments is almost always that they do not negotiate with terrorists – leaving the only solution being a militarized option.

A similar argument can be made with regard to peace operations. The Report of the High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations in 2015 had noted the need for change in the way in which we do things, i.e., to change the cookie-cutter technical and militarized approach to peace operations, which are occurring in highly complex environments. Peace operations, the Panel notes, are largely replacing the need to find effective political solutions to crises. These findings are equally applicable to AU missions, the more so because they lack the required funding, capacity and expertise to carry out even the templated forms of peace operations.

We seek to include women into these knee-jerk response peace-enforcement missions. In particular, we want more women to be deployed to these missions and we argue that their presence will reduce SGBV and that they will be role models, and a plethora of other essentialized and instrumentalized arguments. Both men and women have an equal responsibility to protect all citizens – women should not be left to shoulder the responsibility, nor do they have to excuse their presence in these ways. To have more women as peacekeepers, they need to be present in their national security institutions, receive the necessary training and be deployed by their countries – the challenge has to be addressed at this level. Once again, it needs to be emphasised that there is no inherent transformative capacity of women in uniforms – representation is but a necessary first step. We also need to heed the risk here of simply contributing to the militarization of our societies and to militarized responses to creating peace.

Feminists have been at the forefront of critiquing militarization and calling for more human-centered approaches to security (see for example Cockburn 2010; Enloe 1989, 2000, 2007; Mama 1998, 2008; Sjoberg and Via 2010; Hudson 2005; Lewis 2013). We should therefore not blindly include women in processes that end up reproducing authoritarian patriarchal militarized post-conflict societies. The AU and those responsible for implementing the WPS agenda must therefore reflect more critically on current practices of facilitating peace and security.

Secondly, the strategies that have been employed in the missions, though they have good intent, amount to little more than add-on, quick fix technical exercises that can be quickly reported on. They, too, are templated – capacity building and training (usually very short courses on gender instruments), drafting policies and strategies, and working to support gender ministries and women's groups often with very little resources. These strategies are not changing the behaviour of male peacekeepers, reducing SGBV or the targeting of women in conflict situations, or fundamentally transforming the societies. They are too fragmentary to achieve that. As we face more and more extreme violence, we will see a decrease in the number of women deployed because prevailing stereotypes (of the capability of women and of men as protectors) will prevent many countries from deploying women soldiers into those environments: we see this in the case of AMISOM. We also have to ask what the purpose of implementing UNSCR 1325 is in these peace operations and reorient our work so that we are true to the original intent of gender equality: changing power relations between men and women, creating equitable relations, equality and protecting and empowering women.

The emphasis on closing the gap between policies and implementation is overly fixated on templates and monitoring and evaluation tools. Accountability is commendable but the fundamentally political issues need to be addressed if we want to make headway in resolving conflicts, protecting women and enabling their participation in governance, including related to peace and security.

Implementing the WPS agenda in the African Union's Peace and Security Architecture is proceeding, but with many of the pitfalls that gender mainstreaming in the other sectors has experienced.

Notes

1. These points are often short-handed referred to as the 3 Ps: Participation, Protection and Prevention.
2. For example, UNSCRs 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1989 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015) and more recently 2282 (2016) and 2272 (2016) in addition to the adoption of Recommendation 30 for the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), in 2013, on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations.
3. Tabulated from data in the ISS Peace and Security Council Report.
4. Also see AUC Chairperson 'Appointment of Special Representatives and Heads of African Union Liaison Offices', April 2015, available at www.au.int.
5. See www.amisom-au.org.
6. ibid.
7. The statistics for troops and police are from the AMISOM website, www.amisom-au.org, accessed 25 August 2016. They do not provide gender disaggregated data. The percentages for female peacekeepers were obtained from AU Commission Chairperson, 2016, Report on the AU Commission Implementation of the Women Peace and Security Agenda in Africa, citing statistics from the AMISOM Gender Unit in 2015.
8. Cited on AMISOM's website, www.amisom-au.org.
9. ibid., 2016.
10. www.unamid.unmissions.org
11. UN DPKO website.
12. www.namid.unmissions.org.
13. Calculated from statistics presented on the UNDPKO website for UNAMID, June 2016.
14. www.unamid.unmission.org.
15. ibid.

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