

# Women, Peace and Security in Somalia: A Study of AMISOM

Ingvild Magnæs Gjelsvik

## Summary

This policy brief examines the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security in the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). It focuses specifically on the development of the mission's first gender strategy and the inclusion of women in AMISOM, and provides the following recommendations for:

- *ensuring a realistic and focused gender strategy for AMISOM* by creating a clear and feasible vision for the mission's work on gender and Resolution 1325 in relation to the mission's capacities, resources and mandate
- *ensuring operationalization* of the gender strategy by developing detailed guidelines, implementation plans including budget allocations
- *providing tools for monitoring and evaluation*, including gender-sensitive indicators, sex-segregated data and tracking systems
- *disseminating the gender strategy* throughout the organization, and stressing that this is the responsibility of the entire mission at all levels
- *strengthening AMISOM's gender unit* by allocating adequate resources and personnel
- *enhancing the backing from AU HQ* in Addis Ababa, organizing meetings on a regular basis and arranging field visits to Mogadishu
- *increasing collaboration and coordination* with other international actors by identifying areas where AMISOM has a comparative advantage, such as working with the Federal Government of Somalia on women's political participation, and encouraging stronger inter-organizational support
- *advocating greater inclusion* of women in the mission by engaging in dialogue with the troop-contributing countries on the importance of increasing the number of females in order to fulfil the mission's mandate
- *assessing and ensuring suitable conditions* for male and female staff in AMISOM.

## Introduction

AMISOM was deployed in South Central Somalia in 2007 by the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council as a Peace Support Mission. Today AMISOM has 17,731 troops from five countries<sup>1</sup> and 363 police officers from six countries<sup>2</sup> and consists of three components: military, police and civilian. As a part of the civilian component, the first gender officer was deployed in Mogadishu in 2012. This was the first gender officer to be deployed in an AU Peace Support Operation, paving the way not only for gender mainstreaming in AMISOM, but also for mainstreaming gender considerations into future AU operations as well.<sup>3</sup> The AU has adopted tools to fulfil the objectives of Resolution 1325, including the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. Two action plans have been put in place on mainstreaming gender into the peace and security work; however, there is still a need for more focus on gender and Resolution 1325 in AU's work on peace and security.<sup>4</sup>

Resolution 1325 is recognized as a very important step towards greater protection and empowerment of women in conflict and post-conflict situations, and was later complemented by resolution 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010).<sup>5</sup> These five resolutions on women, peace and security aim to enable women's

- 1 Burundi, Djibouti, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Uganda. <http://amisom-au.org/mission-profile/military-component/>
- 2 Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zimbabwe. <http://amisom-au.org/mission-profile/amisom-police/>
- 3 Yvonne Kasumba and Walter Lotze (2013), 'Mainstreaming Gender into African Union Peace Support Operations: Why We are Getting it Wrong?', *Conflict Trends* (2). P. 23-29.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 UN Women (2012). *Women and Peace and Security: Guidelines for National Implementation*. p.2 <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/Headquarters/Media/Publications/en/02BPlanonWomenandPeaceandSecurity.pdf>

participation in conflict prevention, resolution and recovery in addition to build capacities to protect women from violence and to respond to their recovery needs. However, transforming Resolution 1325 into practice has proven a great challenge. As noted by Olonisakin, ‘... little attention was paid to whether and how its implementation might be ensured across national and regional boundaries, particularly in regions such as Africa, where its application is most critical’.<sup>6</sup> AMISOM’s gender unit aims to build a gender-sensitive organization and to facilitate and increase the focus on gender mainstreaming and Resolution 1325 in Somalia. Although there is only one officer working on gender full-time, the gender unit has implemented several activities in the course of 2013, including gender training for troops, and supporting the Somali government on gender-related issues, including the process of drafting the government’s first gender policy. This brief focuses on AMISOM’s work regarding gender mainstreaming and the presence and inclusion of women in the mission.

#### The Mandate of the Women Peace and Security Resolutions:

- **Participation** of women in peace processes and all public decision-making processes linked to making and building peace;
- **Prevention** of conflict through incorporating women’s perspectives into early warning systems, public educations, and prosecution of violators of women’s rights;
- **Protection** of women during and after conflict by community, national and international security personnel;
- **Peacebuilding** that engages women and addresses their needs in relief and recovery, redress for injustice and investment in economic and social security.

Source: UN WOMEN (2012) *Women and Peace and Security: Guidelines for National Implementation*. p.6.

<http://www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Media/Publications/en/02BPlanonWomenandPeaceandSecurity.pdf>

#### Gender Mainstreaming in AMISOM

In 2013, AMISOM started the process of developing its first gender-mainstreaming strategy, a strategy that will be important not only for AMISOM’s work on gender but also for future AU missions in their approach to gender mainstreaming. It is therefore important to provide a clear strategic, systematic, realistic and operational strategy for gender mainstreaming in all components and activities of the mission. However, to be able to support implementation and reporting on developments and outputs on the strategy and the implementation plan sufficiently, the gender unit will need

to be strengthened with more human and financial resources. Here it should be stressed that gender advisors are intended to play a supportive role rather than be *de facto* ‘gender responsible’. That makes it all the more important for there to be a shared understanding that all mission staff, male and female, are responsible for the implementation of the gender strategy in their everyday work. In order to operationalize this, detailed guidelines and documents must be available to all; further, checklists and yearly implementation plans including budget allocations must be provided. In addition, effective tools must be in place for monitoring and evaluation, including gender-sensitive indicators, sex-segregated data, tracking systems, etc. The gender unit would also benefit from closer support and backing from AU HQ in Addis Ababa. Measures to bridge the significant gap between Mogadishu and Addis Ababa, such as increased communication and frequent field visits, are important aspects to discuss in relation to the making and implementation of the gender strategy.

The gender strategy will be two-fold, addressing both gender mainstreaming in the mission internally and gender mainstreaming in the mission’s work externally. First and foremost, the strategy should focus on how to ensure gender equality and gender mainstreaming within the mission itself. This will include strategies for increasing the number of female staff, ensuring gender equality at all levels, assessing the conditions of women, to mention some central points. In addition, a gender perspective must be applied in the rules of engagement, code of conduct and discipline where gender and sexual based violence and sexual harassment are specifically addressed.

In relation to AMISOM’s external work on gender and Resolution 1325 in Somalia there are two important questions that need to be asked:

1. What gender-related initiatives and activities can AMISOM realistically implement and achieve within its given mandate, capacity and resources?
2. What is AMISOM’s comparative advantage/added value as regards to work on gender in Somalia in general?

After more than two decades of violent and still-ongoing conflict, Somalia is a complex area to work in, and the challenges related to gender equality and gender and sexual based violence are many. However, in order to have a positive and productive impact, AMISOM’s external work on gender must be realistic in terms of what is possible to achieve within the current context of Somalia, given the mission’s mandate, capacity and resources. Many international and national actors are already implementing gender-related activities, and instead of overlapping, *collaboration and cooperation* should be enhanced. Also, rather than focusing on a wide range of activities, it is preferable to narrow down the scope of the work to areas where AMISOM has an added value such as the work on women’s political participation in Somalia.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Funmi Olonisakin (2010) *Ten years since United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. Envisioning its impact on African Women in 2020*. Draft Background Paper, ACCORD High-Level Seminar 8–9 October 2010, Durban, South Africa.

## Women's participation in government politics

AMISOM has already embarked on a positive process of supporting and encouraging the Somali government to ensure gender mainstreaming and women's participation in politics. The draft of the government's gender policy highlights the issue of 'safeguarding the promotion of national policies that guarantee women's quota in all government and private institutions'.<sup>7</sup> In connection with the establishment of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) in 2012, there was a 30% quota for female representatives as Members of Parliament, which AMISOM actively supported. Quota systems for women have proven challenging in many post-conflict African countries, as many countries – including Somalia – also operate with clan quotas.<sup>8</sup> Ensuring clan representation is of greater political importance than ensuring female participation<sup>9</sup> and after the 2012 elections, 14% of the members of the new Somali Parliament were women. With AMISOM's previous and current engagement with the government on the inclusion of women in politics, the mission is in a position to provide useful support to these processes. Identifying and addressing the challenges related to the selection of women in the government, the barriers for women to become active in the politics, and help ensuring that there are suitable female candidates for the next election in 2016 are focal areas where AMISOM can make positive contributions.

## Women's presence and inclusion in AMISOM

Various protocols and frameworks adapted by the AU and other regional actors such as ECOWAS and SADC<sup>10</sup> related to Resolution 1325 have been criticized for focusing mainly on the protection aspect, and not women's participation in peace and security matters.<sup>11</sup> However, there is growing recognition of women's agency in peace-building, in Africa and elsewhere.<sup>12</sup> Lessons learned from the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) have shown that the presence of women in peacekeeping operations can make a positive difference: 'it improves access to the local population (...) and their presence also tends to improve the behaviour of male members of the mission. Finally, their

presence increases the range of skills, approaches, and perspectives within a mission, thus adding to its effectiveness.'<sup>13</sup> The presence of female forces can also help to increase the local communities' acceptance of peace operations, as was the case in UN operations in Namibia, South Africa and Rwanda.<sup>14</sup> All the same, increasing the number of females in peace operations is a global challenge. As of March 2013, there were less than 4% female UN peacekeepers in the world.<sup>15</sup> In accordance with Resolution 1325, AMISOM strives to increase the number of female personnel; however, today only 1.49% of AMISOM's military personnel are women.<sup>16</sup> Uganda, which contributes the highest number of military personnel, has a percentage of 3.1 women in its deployed forces in Somalia, while the other contributing countries have less than one per cent.<sup>17</sup> Even though AMISOM aims to increase the number of females staff it is the troop-contributing countries (TCCs) who decide whom to send to Somalia.

There can be various reasons for the low number of female staff sent by TCCs to AMISOM. For one thing, there may be a low percentage of female personnel in the armed forces in the TCCs in general. Information on the numbers or proportion of females in national forces is often not publically available; however, a report on Resolution 1325 in Uganda showed that the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) in 2011 had a total of 1,566 female soldiers, a figure far from corresponding to 10% of the total forces.<sup>18</sup> Various combining factors may underlie the low number of females in many military forces globally. In many countries, neither the military nor the police make active efforts to recruit women; sometimes they cannot provide sufficient incentives to attract women – possibilities of promotion, good career opportunities, etc. Women often serve at subordinate levels in supportive roles, and are rarely found in high-ranking/decision-making positions, also in peace operations. MONUSCO in DR Congo and MINUSTAH in Haiti are examples of UN missions where women

7 Federal Government of Somalia (2013). *Draft National Gender Policy*. <http://amisom-au.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/EASY-TO-READ-GUIDE-GENDER-POLICY.pdf>

8 Grace Maina (2012) *An Overview of the Situation of Women in Conflict and Post-Conflict Africa*. ACCORD Conference Paper. Issue 1. p.9. <http://www.accord.org.za/images/downloads/conference/ACCORD-conference-paper-1-2012-women-in-conflict.pdf>

9 Ibid.

10 The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Southern African Development Community (SADC).

11 'Funmi Olonisakin (2010) *Ten years since United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. Envisioning its impact on African Women in 2020*. Draft Background Paper, ACCORD High-Level Seminar 8–9 October 2010, Durban, South Africa.

12 Kari Karamé (2004) *Gender Mainstreaming the Peace-building Process in 'Gender and Peace-building in Africa'*, Kari Karamé, (ed.) NUPI Report, Oslo.

13 UN (2000) *Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Operations*. Lessons Learned Unit, Department of Peacekeeping Operations. July 2000. p.29 [http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Resources/UN/dpko\\_mainstreaminggenderperspective\\_2000.pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Resources/UN/dpko_mainstreaminggenderperspective_2000.pdf)

14 Sahana Dharmapuri (2013) *Not Just a Numbers Game: Increasing Women's Participation in UN Peacekeeping*. IPI. Providing for Peacekeeping No.4, p.7. <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Not%20Just%20a%20Numbers%20Game.pdf>

15 Ibid.

16 Nicolle Chido Manjeya and Olivia Victoria Davies (2013) 'AMISOM Troop-contributing Countries and Female Representation', *Conflict Trends* (2). p.52-53.

17 Ibid.

18 Robinah Rubimbwa and Goret Komurembe (2011) *Security Council Resolution 1325: Civil Society Monitoring Report 2011 Uganda*. A project of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders. p.149.

<http://www.gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/uganda1.pdf>

mainly held supportive roles, working as nurses, secretaries, translators, etc.<sup>19</sup>

An even more important factor involved in the low level of women's participation and inclusion in armed forces is societal: norms and biases against women having active roles in combat. 'A common thread (...) is the prevalence of social norms and behaviors that perpetuate inequality between men and women and act as barriers to women's full participation in the security sector'.<sup>20</sup> The armed forces are perceived and constructed as a male-dominated and masculine organization, with their norms and actions shaped by 'typically masculine' characteristics such as warfare, protecting and killing.<sup>21</sup> Cynthia Enloe noted that there is a strong correlation between being manly and being a potential warrior.<sup>22</sup> Women, by contrast, are often understood as the opposite: peaceful and non-violent, not expected to be soldiers. The countries with most females in their armed forces are in the lead not only because they have established national frameworks for gender integration in their forces, but also because they have dealt directly with the social norms and biases that serve to perpetuate gender inequality.<sup>23</sup>

19 Randi Solhjell et al. (2012) *Turning UNSC Resolution 1325 into Operational Practice: A cross-country study on implementing Resolution 1325 in peacekeeping and military operations*. NUPI report, Security in Practice 11, 2012.

20 Sahana Dharmapuri (2013) *Not Just a Numbers Game: Increasing Women's Participation in UN Peacekeeping*. IPI. Providing for Peacekeeping (4), p. 13.

21 Joshua S. Goldstein (2003). *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

22 Cynthia Enloe (1993). *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

23 Sahana Dharmapuri (2013) *Not Just a Numbers Game: Increasing Women's Participation in UN Peacekeeping*. IPI. Providing for Peacekeeping (4), p. 13.

Although these challenges lie at the national level in the troop-contributing countries, AMISOM can still play an active role in challenging TCCs' views on sending female personnel to Somalia, pointing out that increasing the number of women is important in order for the mission to achieve its mandate. However, in order to encourage TCCs to send more women to Somalia, the mission must make sure that the conditions are acceptable for both men and women. Missions such as AMISOM, which are highly male-dominated and of a very masculine character, may not prove to be very attractive for women. Crucial in that regard is a critical, gender-aware, analysis of the conditions for AMISOM troops. That should not be limited to assessing only the physical facilities (like separate facilities for men and women, and accommodating the different needs of male and female troops): more importantly, it should assess the level of gender equality, appropriate codes of conduct, issues of sexual harassment etc. within the mission. This is relevant not only for the military and police components but also for the civilian component – which, equally, have a low number of female staff. It is important to note that increasing the numbers of females in AMISOM will not automatically lead to a more gender-inclusive mission. Integrating and mainstreaming a gender perspective in all parts and levels of the mission is essential, especially in a male-dominated mission such as AMISOM.

4

Data for this study were gathered during a fieldtrip conducted in May and June 2013 in Mogadishu, Addis Ababa and Nairobi. Resources for the study were provided by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Training for Peace Programme.




Norwegian Institute of International Affairs  
P.O. Box 8159 Dep, N-0033 Oslo, Norway  
[www.nupi.no](http://www.nupi.no)

Established in 1959, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs [NUPI] is a leading independent research institute on international politics and areas of relevance to Norwegian foreign policy. Formally under the Ministry of Education and Research, NUPI nevertheless operates as an independent, non-political instance in all its professional activities. Research undertaken at NUPI ranges from short-term applied research to more long-term basic research.

#### About the Author

**Ingvild Magnæs Gjelsvik** is a Junior Research Fellow in the Peace Operations and Peacebuilding Research Group at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. She works mainly with the Training for Peace in Africa Programme focusing on Somalia. Gjelsvik previously worked for UNDP Somalia, and has in recent undertaken several research trips to the Somali regions in connection with studies on disengagement of pirates and al-Shabaab, and the implementation of UNSCR 1325.