



# ROYAL CAMBODIAN ARMED FORCES

2023 Report on Results of the Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) Assessment



**DCAF** Geneva Centre  
for Security Sector  
Governance

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This report uses the Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) Methodology, developed by DCAF and the Cornell GSS Lab.

## **Disclaimer**

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors based on the best available information they have.

The report does not necessarily reflect the views of the RCAF, UN Women, the EIF, the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations.

The RCAF has provided corrections or clarifications during the validation workshop. The present report has been validated by the RCAF and integrates the feedback and insights of a representative group of the RCAF.

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
<b>CAR</b>	Central African Republic
<b>CEDAW</b>	UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>CMAA</b>	Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority
<b>CPCS</b>	Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
<b>CPP</b>	Cambodian People's Party
<b>CPTM</b>	Core Pre-deployment Training Materials
<b>CPX</b>	Command Post Exercise
<b>DCAF</b>	Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance
<b>DDR</b>	Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration
<b>EOD</b>	Explosive ordinance disposal
<b>ERW</b>	Explosive remnants of war
<b>FFF</b>	Fact-finding form
<b>FGD</b>	Focus group discussion
<b>FUNCINPEC</b>	National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Co-operative Cambodia
<b>GFP</b>	Gender Focal Point
<b>GRK</b>	Gendarmerie Royal de Khmer
<b>HQ</b>	Headquarters
<b>IPMEC</b>	Institute for Peacekeeping, Mines and ERW Clearance
<b>MDD</b>	Mine Demining Dogs
<b>MINUSCA</b>	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
<b>MoD</b>	Ministry of Defence
<b>MoFAIC</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
<b>Mol</b>	Ministry of Interior
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of understanding
<b>MoWA</b>	Ministry of Women's Affairs
<b>MO</b>	Military Observer
<b>MOWIP</b>	Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations Barrier Assessment Methodology
<b>MP</b>	Military Police
<b>NAP</b>	National Action Plan
<b>NCC</b>	National Coordination Committee for UN Peacekeeping Deployment
<b>NCO</b>	Non-commissioned Officer
<b>NGO</b>	Non-government organization

<b>NPMEC</b>	<b>National Centre for Peacekeeping Force, Mine and Explosive Remnants of War Clearance</b>
<b>PCRS</b>	<b>Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System</b>
<b>PKO</b>	<b>Training School for Multinational Peacekeeping Forces</b>
<b>RCA</b>	<b>Royal Cambodian Army</b>
<b>RCAF</b>	<b>Royal Cambodian Armed Forces</b>
<b>RCN</b>	<b>Royal Cambodian Navy</b>
<b>RGC</b>	<b>Royal Government of Cambodia</b>
<b>RPA WPS</b>	<b>Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security</b>
<b>SEA</b>	<b>Sexual exploitation and abuse</b>
<b>SGBV</b>	<b>Sexual and gender-based violence</b>
<b>SO</b>	<b>Staff Officer</b>
<b>TMCC</b>	<b>Training and Mine Unexploded Ordinance Clearance Center</b>
<b>TPCCs</b>	<b>Troop and Police Contributing Countries</b>
<b>UN</b>	<b>United Nations</b>
<b>UNIFIL</b>	<b>United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon</b>
<b>UNMIS</b>	<b>United Nations Mission in Sudan</b>
<b>UNMISS</b>	<b>United Nations Mission in South Sudan</b>
<b>UNSCR</b>	<b>United Nations Security Council Resolution</b>
<b>UNTAC</b>	<b>United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia</b>
<b>US</b>	<b>United States</b>
<b>UXO</b>	<b>Unexploded Ordnances</b>
<b>VAW</b>	<b>Violence against women</b>
<b>WPS</b>	<b>Women, peace and security</b>

## Executive summary

The Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) Barrier Assessment Methodology for the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces examines the RCAF's ability to deploy women to, and ensure their meaningful participation in United Nations (UN) peace operations through 10 issue areas. It uses three data collection tools: a fact-finding form (FFF), key decision-maker interviews and a survey. Together, these data tools are used to fill out a comprehensive and vetted indicator form that ranks the barriers. The assessment team undertook the data collection for this project from 20 December 2022 to 25 April 2023. The survey was conducted in two phases, with phase 1 starting immediately following the MOWIP training in December 2022, after getting approval from the Director-General of the National Peacekeeping Force, Mines and Explosive Remnants of War Clearance (NPMEC) and the Director of the Training School for Multinational Peacekeeping Forces (PKO) in Kampong Speu. Phase 1 started with surveying personnel from three contingents undergoing pre-deployment training<sup>1</sup> and ended in mid-January 2023 with a group of women officers stationed at NPMEC Headquarters (HQ). The enumerator team was put on temporary hold to allow time for the assessment team to plan and arrange the logistics for phase 2, which involved contingents recently returned from UN missions and geographically dispersed. Phase 2 started with a survey of returned personnel at the PKO and the Institute for Peacekeeping, Mines and ERW Clearance (IPMEC). In order to complete the survey sample, enumerators also conducted remote surveys<sup>2</sup> with women personnel then deployed in the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the UN Interim Force In Lebanon (UNIFIL). Phase 2 ended with final surveys with female personnel at the Cambodian Military Academy at the end of March.

A separate team that worked closely with the enumerator and interview teams was responsible for the FFF, while conducting literature research using various channels. This included via correspondence with, and publicly available resources from, the Ministry of Defence (MoD), Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MoFAIC), Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), and Ministry of Works and Vocational Training. Following the initial completion of the FFF in April 2023, the Cornell University Gender and Security Sector Lab (Cornell GSS Lab) trained the FFF team on how to complete the indicator form, which was submitted the following month.

Key decision-maker interviews took considerably longer to complete due to difficulty getting approval and scheduled confirmation from senior officials as the national election campaign was fully underway. The interview team began by interviewing the NPMEC Director-General in February 2023, followed by several other senior leaders of NPMEC. The team interviewed Secretaries of State of various ministries including MoD, MoWA, and the National Coordination Committee for UN Peacekeeping Deployment (NCC).

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<sup>1</sup> They were preparing for their deployment to replace incoming contingents. All of them were stationed at the Training School for Multinational Peacekeeping Forces in Kampong Speu at the time, making it convenient for enumerators to survey them consecutively.

<sup>2</sup> The remote interviews were necessary to fill in the required number of deployed female respondents since those in the country were not available or logistics arrangements for them to participate in the survey were deemed difficult. Enumerators used MS Teams available on UN-issued computers to be IT-compliant, which also ensured high enough bandwidth for reliable video calls with enumerators. Video call systems Zoom and Google Meet were tested but both proved to be unsuitable due to unreliable network connection and restrictions on UN computers and the internet. Given the time zone differences, enumerators had to change their work schedule to match with the time that peacekeepers were available.

## a. Best Practices

- The RCAF does not impose any restrictions on women serving in UN peacekeeping missions. Both men and women are subject to the same rules and regulations as well as codes of conduct of the RCAF and of the UN mission.
- Men and women in the RCAF serve equally in leadership roles, even after considering rank. 7% of the sample have served in one commanding position, both 7% of men and 7% of women.
- Men and women serve equally in combat and operational roles while on mission. 31% of all respondents (31% of women and 30% of men) engaged in operational activities every day while on mission. Yet, in the survey and during the validation workshop, women were more likely to say that they had never engaged in combat/operations.
- Personnel believe all-female units are equally capable of carrying out important tasks while on mission. Respondents indicated that all-female units were equally capable of addressing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), contributing to peace and security, responding to refugees, and responding to protests.
- Most personnel have at least one mentor within the RCAF. 73% of respondents, (68% of men and 79% of women), said they have at least one mentor within the RCAF who can provide guidance about their career.
- Most personnel are willing to approach leadership to report on job and family-related matters (88% of respondents – 90% of men and 86% of women) or misconduct (71% of men and 80% of women).
- There are male allies who advance and support women and women's rights. A majority of respondents said they know a male colleague who has corrected problematic behaviour towards women (55% total: 55% of men and 54% of women) or stood up for women who have been discriminated against (50% total: 55% of women and 46% men).
- The RCAF has a gender mainstreaming policy and senior leadership acknowledge gender mainstreaming. 46% of respondents, (42% of men and 50% of women), were aware of this policy.
- Men and women serve as Gender Focal Points (GFPs). Within the RCAF, 13% of respondents have served as GFPs, (5% of men and 24% of women). Women were significantly more likely to serve as GFPs.
- Peacekeeping in UN missions is integrated into Cambodia's national defence strategy.
- Peacekeeping is formally considered in decisions regarding promotion.
- Personnel think there are career advantages to deploying to a UN peace operation. 96% of deployed personnel and 94% of all personnel believed that such a deployment would advance their career.
- Personnel reported that salary earned from deployment helps their well-being. 87% of respondents, (88% of men and 87% of women) reported that UN deployment gives additional salary to what they earn in the RCAF.
- Peacekeepers are memorialized in Cambodia, and surveyed personnel reported that they were recognized for their peacekeeping contributions. A majority of respondents reported that peacekeepers are recognized by the Government (87% total: 85% of men and 82% of women) and by the Armed Forces (55% total: 58% of men and 51% of women).



- Personnel believe men and women should take equal responsibility for various mission tasks when they are on a peacekeeping mission. Participants believe that women and men should equally respond to a bomb situation on a mission (average score of perceived competence for this task is 7.75 for women and 7.93 for men). Respondents also said that women and men have equal capability in drafting situation reports, engaging with refugees in a camp, training the local gendarmerie/police/military, and gathering information from the local population.
- Women's and men's views about the roles that men and women play in society do not really reflect traditional gender roles. The survey asked a battery of questions about people's beliefs about gender roles. The mean response was equal to the median value, meaning that the majority of respondents did not necessarily hold rigid beliefs about traditional gender roles. However, there is still strong evidence that views among the RCAF leadership about gender roles inhibit women from participating in peacekeeping missions.

## **b. Top Barriers To Women's Meaningful Participation In UN Deployments**

- Female officers tend to face more stigma than men if they deploy. Women are significantly more likely to feel that they face social stigma if they deploy. 15% of survey respondents, (8% of men and 24% of women), said that women face social stigma if they deploy to a UN peace operation. Focus group participants stated that women have to ask for permission from their husbands to deploy, and that the social perceptions of deployed women is not good. They also stated that husbands tend to think that their wives should be close to home and take care of children.
- There are few women in the RCAF and very few in leadership positions. According to the FFF, battalions/formed police units are systematically composed of less than 20% women. Additionally, only 10% of operational units include women, which means that 90% are unanimously male. Few women personnel (10%) said that they have served in a leadership position (compared to 14% of men).
- Women were more likely to perceive mission facilities/equipment as inadequate. Women were more likely than men to say that bathrooms, sleeping quarters, office space and uniforms were inadequate.
- Women perceive health facilities while on mission as more inadequate than men do. Women lacked access to adequate reproductive healthcare, birth control, mental health resources, and female physicians.
- Uniforms do not accommodate female peacekeepers. 20% of deployed personnel, (39% of men and 61% of women), said that their uniforms did not fit. A vast majority (88%) of deployed personnel, (87% of men and 90% of women), said that uniforms did not accommodate their cultural or religious needs.
- Men and women believe that different skills are necessary for missions, with men believing that "harder" skills, such as combat, are necessary whereas women believe that 'softer' skills are necessary. Validation workshop participants confirmed that women and men have different beliefs about the skills necessary for a mission. This leads to gendered divisions of labour while on mission and also prioritizes 'hard skills' over 'soft skills', even though both are necessary for peacekeeping effectiveness.

- The majority of respondents (72% total: 73% of men and 69% of women) were aware of the driving skills required for deployment. Yet, a minority of respondents (42%) believe they have the driving skills needed for deployment. Women (35%) were less likely than men (46%) to say they had this skill. This is consistent with the finding that women (46%) were significantly less likely than men (79%) to have a driver's license, which makes them less competitive for training and deployment.
- Pre-deployment training is required, but this training does not adequately address some of the required skills needed for deployment (e.g., driving skills) and gender training is lacking. Only 6% of survey respondents, (7% of men and 45% of women), said that they had taken pre-deployment gender training.
- Disciplinary records are necessary for deployment, but not all personnel are aware of this requirement. 58% of all personnel surveyed (63% of men and 52% of women) stated that disciplinary records are necessary for formed unit deployment, but only 35% of personnel (39% of women and 32% of men) stated that this is necessary for MO deployment.
- The RCAF does not have an official leave policy for paternal, family, or elderly care. However, personnel are allotted unofficial leave on a case by case basis, through a long administrative process. Women were significantly less likely to be aware of paternity and elderly care leave benefits than their male counterparts. Women (44%) were less likely than men (67%) to be aware of paternity leave policy. Men (39%) were more likely to be aware of elderly care benefits than women (26%).
- Men do not feel like they lose out on career opportunities by taking any type of leave but women generally feel that they miss out on opportunities in the RCAF while on leave. 50% of respondents, including 46% of men and 55% of women, said they missed out on opportunities while on leave.
- According to interviews, it is not acceptable for women to breastfeed at work. Additionally, 88% of respondents, 84% of men and 93% of women, reported that women do not feel comfortable breastfeeding/pumping at work.
- Payment from the RCAF is not sufficient for managing a household. Only 55% of respondents believe that payment from the country's security institution is sufficient to manage their household. Women (45%) were significantly less likely than men (62%) to say that payment from the RCAF is sufficient for managing their household.
- Family members tend to take care of children within Cambodia, as national childcare facilities are hard to find and expensive, with the burden falling mainly on women. Only 41% of personnel reported the availability of national childcare subsidies and 35% reported the availability of national childcare facilities.
- Men and women deploy at different ages and life stages, and preferences do not always align with reality. While the average age of first deployment is 31 for men, women's first deployment average age is 28. Additionally, on average, both men and women said that a child should be at least 4 years old before their father is deployed and 5 years old before their mother is deployed.
- Among all personnel who have deployed to a UN peacekeeping mission, 80% of men and 79% of women indicated that they have taken pre-deployment training at the national peacekeeping training centre. Focus group participants pointed to women's health issues,

such as periods, as reasons preventing them from attending training. Validation workshop participants emphasized that women also lacked access to nurses and female doctors at the training facility.

### c. Top Recommendations To Overcome The Barriers

#### **NPMEC/RCAF should:**

- Allow and encourage personnel to participate in training opportunities to improve other skills beyond those that are specific to unit deployment. NPMEC/RCAF should consider a protocol change to allow personnel to attend training sessions that focus on skills outside their assigned duties on mission. This will help cultivate a cultural norm within the RCAF where this type of additional training is encouraged.
- Improve education about the requirements for deployment. If officers are not aware of the requirements, or believe that the requirements are beyond their capabilities, they may be reluctant to volunteer. Senior officers should talk openly about deployment and training opportunities with personnel and encourage both men and women to participate.
- Require pre-deployment technical and practical training on driving skills for all personnel (i.e., do not limit driving training to contingent personnel, extend 4X4 vehicle training to MOs and Staff Officers (SOs)).
- Explore creative options to subsidize the cost of additional training that will help improve certain skill that peacekeepers lack, such as driving, but which they require to pass the pre-deployment driving exam. Given funding concerns, this might include mobilizing existing donors to provide complementary international training (e.g., request the UN to provide training on driving, operating heavy equipment, and gender-sensitivity). Alternatively, develop new partnerships with donors and other countries to secure more access to overseas training, particularly gender-oriented training opportunities.
- Because women are significantly more likely to face stigma around deployment, the RCAF might consider implementing awareness and educational programmes to challenge misconceptions surrounding women's deployments. The RCAF should highlight female peacekeepers' contributions to peace operations and peacekeeping effectiveness.
- Require leaders to take annual gender training and awareness courses to help inform and deter reliance on traditional gender stereotypes within the RCAF.
- Implement a policy for personal days off that can be used by all personnel for specific health challenges, including menstrual-related needs, to mitigate stigma and ensure equality.
- Provide an emergency kit for all personnel, containing essential first aid materials, personal hygiene supplies, and birth control, to cater to basic health and hygiene needs during travel and deployment.
- Ensure women have access to a private area for breastfeeding and/or pumping upon return from maternity leave.
- Provide paid family, sick, and elderly leave. Further, we recommend creating an official paternity leave policy with benefits.

- Include in advertisement materials used in general RCAF recruitment campaigns, as well as those specific to peacekeeping, the policy that passports are automatically issued for personnel who pass the fitness exam.
- Provide on-site childcare facilities or subsidies for childcare in order to encourage more women and male officers with children to join.
- Reimburse personnel for the cost of obtaining a valid driver's license and (when applicable) passport.
- Ensure the availability of separate and adequate bathroom facilities and sleeping quarters for different genders to respect privacy and comfort.
- In new missions, collaborate with the UN or other institutions to support a comprehensive needs assessment that includes consideration of women's needs.
- Address the issue of limited supplies in initial deployments by planning and requesting necessary resources well in advance.
- Implement a fair and non-discriminatory policy regarding sick leave for menstrual-related issues, ensuring that requests for leave are treated with respect and without bias.
- Strengthen mental health support services for personnel, ensuring access to adequate resources and professional help during deployment.
- Design and distribute uniforms that are suitable for the diverse body shapes and sizes of all personnel, ensuring comfort and functionality.
- Ensure an equal and sufficient distribution of uniforms, recognizing that women may require more sets due to health-related needs, such as menstruation.
- Before deployment, prioritize the availability of essential medication and equipment specific to women's health needs.
- Provide access to female primary health providers and specialists, including gynaecologists, to address the unique health issues of women and to contribute to fostering a comfortable and understanding environment.
- Conduct a full needs assessment for supplies and facilities prior to deployment, taking into consideration the specific requirements of women. This should be done during the memorandum of understanding (MoU) phase.
- Increase monthly payments for officers to promote enlistment and retention in the RCAF.
- Although there is an age requirement for deployment, the RCAF should consider deployment opportunities for personnel across all ages and family situations.
- Consistently communicate a supportive and inclusive stance regarding the deployment of female officers.
- Consider highlighting the importance and visibility of female role models and trailblazers within the institution and in the broader society.

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

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The Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) methodology fits within the broader goals of Cambodia's women, peace, and security (WPS) agenda. Cambodia is one of the leaders among member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to advance the WPS agenda, as demonstrated by the country's adoption and implementation of policies designed to promote gender mainstreaming within the national security institution.

The Kingdom of Cambodia has taken active steps to increase the participation of women in all decision-making processes pertaining to prevention, management, and resolution of conflict. Since 2005, gender mainstreaming action groups have been created in all line ministries. Twenty-four (of twenty-eight) ministries and institutions have developed their own Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans. The current national gender mainstreaming policy is the Neary Rattanak V Five Year Strategic Plan (2019-2023).<sup>3</sup> This National Action Plan (NAP) integrates all of Cambodia's national development policies and strategies in all sectors, including defence and peacekeeping. The gender working group of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) has implemented this overarching gender mainstreaming policy within the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) by releasing the five-year strategic plan (2016-2020) for gender mainstreaming and promotion of women in the RCAF<sup>4</sup>.

The 2016-2020 MoD gender mainstreaming strategic plan lists the following six priorities as underlying strategies:

- Increase gender awareness of officers, non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and soldiers of both genders (male and female);<sup>5</sup>
- Increase the quantity and quality of women officers, NCOs, and soldiers;
- Provide more opportunity and encouragement for women to be promoted and involved in decision-making;
- Pay more attention to disabled and retired women military personnel;
- Pay more attention to women trainers and athletes in the RCAF;
- Monitor and assess the implementation of national strategic gender mainstreaming (i.e. MoD gender mainstreaming strategic plan, Neary Rattanak Plan).

In 2019, Samdech Aka Moha Sena Padey Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia and member of the Circle of Leadership, committed to support the implementation of the Secretary-General's zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in UN operations.<sup>6</sup> Cambodia does not currently have a NAP in response to UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. The country does have a NAP to Prevent Violence against Women 2019-2023, which aims to address gender issues like domestic and sexual violence, human trafficking, and violence against women (VAW).

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<sup>3</sup> The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) will release an updated version of this strategic plan (Neary Rattanak VI) early next year.

<sup>4</sup> This document is only available in Khmer.

<sup>5</sup> According to the interviews, in the Cambodian military "gender" is still widely regarded as man and woman or male or female. There is no other recognized gender.

<sup>6</sup> <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1x/k1x4d3bymh>.

In 2014, the MoD appointed H.E Dam Dariny as the MoD Secretary of State in charge of gender and legislation. She led the gender working group and worked on the gender mainstreaming policy and action plan. In December 2021, she announced that the MoD will create more opportunities for women, including consideration for promotion to higher rank to match their knowledge, skills, and experience. In 2023, to reinforce the RCAF's commitment to addressing gender issues in the Armed Forces, two women were promoted to three and four star generals. In a context where women are frequently excluded from decision-making at both the national and sub-national levels, the RCAF leadership considers that improving women's representation in leadership roles is crucial to address gender issues in the Armed Forces.

In recognition of the meaningful contribution of women and in support of UNSCR 2242, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has supported efforts to increase the number of female peacekeepers by actively engaging with partners and collaborating in regional and international initiatives to promote women in peacekeeping. In terms of recruitment and promotion policy to increase women's participation, the RCAF recruits new service women and men from time to time to fulfil specific personnel needs of each unit and the organization as a whole. This commitment to improving women's recruitment allowed Cambodia to deploy the first women-led contingent to the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in February 2023.

This appointment also aims to inspire young women in the RCAF by showing the full range of their deployable positions and roles in a contingent.<sup>7</sup> More recently, in August 2023 the RGC unveiled the Pentagonal Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency in Cambodia, aimed at fostering economic growth, job creation, equity, efficiency, and sustainability over the next 25 years. According to this document, "For international affairs, the Royal Government of Cambodia has made a number of marvellous achievements in strengthening its relationships with countries in the region and around the globe, adhering to the principles of an independent foreign policy based on the rules of law, including contributing to the UN peacekeeping mission by subsequently sending Blue Helmet forces."<sup>8</sup> In this same document, we can also read that it is "continuously emphasized on the importance of Gender mainstreaming." The RGC also adopted the Cambodia Sustainable Development Goals Framework, which continuously emphasizes the importance of gender mainstreaming. Samdech Thipadei Hun Manet's statement at the 78th session of the UN General Assembly in September 2023<sup>9</sup> emphasized Cambodia's renewed commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals and UN peacekeeping.

The National Centre for Peacekeeping Force, Mine and Explosive Remnants of War Clearance (NPMEC) has also shown strong interest in increasing the role of women in peacekeeping. It recently launched a recruitment campaign to select 20 women to join peacekeeping contingents in preparation for UN mission deployment. This yearly endeavour to recruit women to fill specific deployment needs demonstrates the willingness and effort of the NPMEC to attract more female

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<sup>7</sup> To further reinforce this statement, NPMEC plans to deploy the second female Contingent Commander to lead the outgoing Military Police contingent that will be deployed to UNMISS in the next few months. This highlights the results of RGC's pledge to the UN to strengthen and increase women's meaningful participation in UN peacekeeping missions.

<sup>8</sup> UN Peacekeeping Forces—referred to informally as 'blue helmets' due to recognizable UN blue helmets.

<sup>9</sup> Cambodia PM addresses UN General Assembly, 78th session, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvlrNjh1a0o&ab\\_channel=UnitedNations](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvlrNjh1a0o&ab_channel=UnitedNations).

military officers despite the lack of policy articulation at this juncture. Increasing the number of female peacekeepers has also been publicly supported at high levels, including by Cambodia’s Defence Minister.<sup>10</sup>

The Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance (CMAA) Authority has also endorsed gender mainstreaming in its mine action plan for 2021-2025.<sup>11</sup> Among the specific/priority actions to promote gender mainstreaming in mine action, the policy aims to increase the capacity of CMAA Mine Action Planning Units, operators, and sub-national and local authorities; promote women’s equal participation in mine action processes; improve services for survivors; and strengthen explosive ordnance risk education and advocacy activities. The NPMEC has been involved to ensure that mine operations incorporate more women from top to bottom and expand the role of women in demining initiatives. Cambodia is mainstreaming female deminers in response to the UN’s WPS agenda to promote women’s participation in peacekeeping. Currently, many female Cambodian peacekeepers serve as medical and security personnel, civil engineers, and mine clearance experts.

Table 1 represents the different roles that RCAF personnel served in while deployed on UN missions in 2023. Men represent the majority of personnel serving in all mission role types. Amongst the

**Table 1: 2023 RCAF Peacekeeping deployment<sup>12</sup>**

Mission Role	Men		Women		Total
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage	
Transport and Maintenance	62	95%	3	5%	65
Fire Brigade	6	50%	6	50%	12
Administration	1	13%	7	88%	8
Medical	32	76%	10	24%	42
Leadership	85	87%	13	13%	98
Mine clearance and EOD	137	87%	20	13%	157
Engineering	202	91%	20	9%	222
Military Police	40	55%	33	45%	73
Logistics and finance	70	67%	35	33%	105

different types of mission roles, the proportion of women was greatest in Military Police (MP) and in logistics, administration and finance positions. On the other hand, women were least represented in transport and maintenance, leadership, engineering and mine clearance. This highlights the low proportion of women serving in technical and dangerous areas like engineering and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), compared to higher levels of women serving in office and finance roles and as MP.

<sup>10</sup> Erin Handley, “Few women in upper ranks of Cambodia’s military,” The Phnom Penh Post, 6 March 2018.

<sup>11</sup> The 2021-2025 mine action plan was prepared by the CMAA Gender Team with the support of UNDP.

<sup>12</sup> Statistics provided by NPMEC Human Resources Department.

According to the FFF, battalions/formed police units are systematically composed of less than 20% women. Additionally, 10% of operational units include women, which means that 90% are unanimously male. The RGC considers women's participation in peace processes as a key step towards ensuring conflict resolution and peacebuilding and is willing to take active steps to increase the participation of women in all decision-making processes pertaining to prevention, management and resolution of conflict. To make this commitment a reality, Cambodia has received resources from the Elsie Initiative Fund to identify barriers to the deployment of uniformed women in UN peace operations.<sup>13</sup>

### **a. The Royal Cambodian Armed Forces: Profile And National Characteristics**

Cambodia was a French protectorate for 90 years and through the “crusade for independence” of the late Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk, Cambodia gained its independence on 9 November 1953. As the Vietnam War spilled over into Cambodia in the late 1960s, the country was launched into a 30-year period of conflict and social upheaval shaped by regional Cold War dynamics and oppressive national rule.<sup>14</sup> In 1975, the Khmer Rouge took over the country. Headed by Pol Pot, its brand of communism led to the purging of Cambodia's educated classes. The population was systematically driven into the countryside to begin establishing a collectivized agricultural system. Between April 1975 and January 1979, an estimated 1.5 million Cambodians died from malnutrition, overwork and disease, while at least 200,000 others were executed without trial as ‘class enemies’. The Khmer Rouge was eventually swept from power on 7 January 1979 by the Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation with support from the Vietnamese Volunteer Army. The resulting People's Republic of Kampuchea spent the next 10 years defending its rule against the opposition comprising the Khmer Rouge, the royalist National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Co-operative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC) and the Khmer People's National Liberation Front.<sup>15</sup>

Talks between resistance factions and the Government began in 1987 with extensive international involvement. The resulting Paris Peace Accords of 1991 had two main objectives: to end international involvement in Cambodia, and ensure all factions relinquished their weapons and took part in the political process. The UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was established in early 1992 to oversee implementation of the agreements and elections. It functioned as the country's governing authority until its mandate ended in 1993. The country has been governed by a constitutional monarchy since then, dominated by the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP). The July 2023 election was the 7th national election in this Southeast Asian country since 1993, and was perceived as an important juncture due to the transition from the previous members of the ruling party to the next generation. The ruling CPP endorsed Hun Manet, the eldest son of the Prime Minister, in the 43rd Meeting of the CPP Central Committee, a meeting that was attended by all senior officials of the party and 830 Central Committee members. Following the CPP's victory in the election, his Majesty Preah Bat Samdech Preah Boromneath Norodom Sihamoni, King of Cambodia, appointed the H.E. Dr. Hun Manet as the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia for the 7th legislature of the National Assembly.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://cambodia.un.org/en/179373-cambodia-receives-funding-elsie-initiative-fund-identify-barriers-deployment-uniformed-women>.

<sup>14</sup> UQAM, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, The Indochina War (1945-1956) An interdisciplinarity tool:

<https://indochine.uqam.ca/en/historical-dictionary/1284-royal-crusade-for-independence>.

html#:--:text=Between%20February%20and%20November%201953,the%20world%20and%20throughout%20Cambodia.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.information.gov.kh/Articles/61563>.



The Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (កងយោធពលខេមរភូមិន្ទ, RCAF) is Cambodia's national military force. The Supreme Commander-in-Chief is King Norodom Sihamoni. Since 2018, General Vong Pisen has been the Commander-in-Chief of the RCAF, i.e. chief military advisor to the RGC and highest ranking General in the High Command, which manages all military organizations. The RCAF is charged with protecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Cambodia. It was originally created in 1946, when Cambodia was a French protectorate, but the official date of the RCAF's founding is 9 November 1953, when Cambodia gained independence from France. The RCAF was later rebuilt in 1993 after the UNTAC mission ended. That year also marked the third phase of the RCAF's development, which continues until today. Following the Paris Peace Agreement on 23 Oct 1991, and the subsequent UNTAC mission, the RCAF underwent a process to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate (DDR) three out of four military forces/parties to the armed conflict in Cambodia. These three military forces, namely the Government army (State of Cambodia), Khmer People's National Liberation Front and FUNCINPEC integrated and formed the new RCAF in 1993 and continued to contain Khmer Rouge forces, which were still very active in their controlled regions. During this early period, the "Win-Win Strategy" articulated by Samdech Aka Moha Sena Padey Techo Hun Sen in late 1998 delivered a great path forward to peace by convincing a large majority of Khmer Rouge forces to secede and join the Government in 1996, paving the way for the complete collapse of the Khmer Rouge. The military reform programme resumed after the Khmer Rouge political and military organizations were brought to a bloodless end.

The RCAF is divided into four service branches. The first branch is the Royal Cambodian Army (RCA), which has existed since the creation of the RCAF. The Army is the largest branch, representing about 75% of the RCAF. It has troops stationed in each of the country's 25 provinces and 85,000 ground forces divided into 11 divisions of infantry, with integrated armour and artillery support. Before becoming Prime Minister, Samdech Thipadei was a General in the Army as well as Deputy Commander in Chief and Army Commander. He was also the Deputy Commander in Chief of the RCAF. Following the 2023 general election, won by the CPP, he was appointed Prime Minister on 7 August 2023. He was replaced as Chief of Army by Lieutenant General Mao Sophan, former commander of Brigade 70, who was promoted to 4-star General in October 2023.

Cambodia is divided into six military regions, each comprising three or four provinces. Each military region is commanded by a Lieutenant General and includes multiple sub-military zones and infantry brigades commanded by a Major General, and multiple border defence units commanded by a Colonel. Each military region HQ is supported by a Brigadier and Major General.

The Lieutenant General commander of each military zone is assisted by a Chief of Staff with a rank of Brigadier General or Major General. The military operation zone is under a Brigadier. In every province, there is a military base called the military operation zone under the command of a Colonel. There are garrisons in major cities and major army bases. There are currently no all-female battalions/police stations.

The second branch of the RCAF is the Royal Cambodian Navy (RCN). It has roughly 8,000 active personnel and operates 228 boats/ships in active service. The Navy possesses 15 patrol craft and a further five patrol craft of the "fast attack" variety. There are also about 200 motorized and manual canoes. The country's seagoing capability was boosted in August 2005 when China handed over five patrol boats. In 2007, a further 10 patrol boats were handed over, with a value of

US\$100,000,000. The craft were donated by China to help counter piracy, transnational crime, smuggling and to safeguard future oil installations. In 2007, Cambodia reported that it was increasing the strength of its Navy from 1,000 to 3,000 sailors, apart from creating a force of 2,000 Marine Infantry. Many RCN officers received their training at the Vietnam Naval Academy. The RCN also has many plans to strengthen its naval fleet, with assistance from China, Germany, Vietnam, Indonesia, South Korea, and Japan. There are currently no all-female maritime units or naval command posts.

The third branch is the Royal Cambodian Air Force, which is the smallest service branch with 5,000 members. It operates in every province that has an airport. Since the end of the hostilities, its operations have centred around training, liaison and VIP transport. Sorties in support of humanitarian needs have been conducted as well. Five of the L-39C aircraft are still in service, although at least two have been grounded at any time due to lack of spare parts. There are currently no all-female squadrons or aviation command posts.

The fourth branch of the RCAF is the Gendarmerie (GRK). It is responsible for the maintenance of public order and internal security. The paramilitary unit has a strength of 30,000 soldiers deployed in all provinces. Its headquarters is located in Phnom Penh, with the unit's chain of command through the RCAF High Command. The Gendarmerie is under the direct supervision of a commander with an equivalent rank to General. The High Command is responsible for monitoring all Gendarmerie units as well as general training. Duties of the GRK include: restoring peace and stability if they have been heavily disturbed; counter terrorism; countering violent groups, and repressing riots in prisons.

The GRK's civil duties include: to provide security and public peace; to investigate and prevent organized crime, terrorism and other violent groups; to protect state and private property; to help and assist civilians and other emergency forces in case of emergency, natural disaster, civil unrest and armed conflicts. Its military duties include: to preserve and protect national security, state, property, public peace, and public order, and to assist other security forces in case of emergency, civil unrest, and war; to repress riots; to reinforce martial law and mobilization; to fight and apprehend suspected criminals, terrorists and other violent groups.

The GRK consists of 10 battalion sized units. Each battalion has 500 - 1,000 member policemen. The principal bases are located in Phnom Penh. The Gendarmerie are stationed to monitor all 25 provinces and 186 districts, working with the local people. A unit includes: a mobile team, consisting of six intervention units, an intervention vehicle battalion, a cavalry, and four infantry. Its training school is located in what is now Kamboul district, Phnom Penh. There are currently no all-female Gendarmerie stations.

All the Armed Forces operate under the jurisdiction of the MoD. Army, Navy, Air Force, and Gendarmerie are under the High Command HQ. Each branch manages and maintains operational controls of their respective operational and tactical units. Each unit has a Gender Focal Point (GFP), usually appointed by the Commanding Officer of the unit, who reports to either the head of the gender unit/working group in High Command HQ or in MoD. This is in compliance with article 5 of resolution 1332, which "expresses its willingness to incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations, and urges the Secretary-General to ensure that, where appropriate, field operations include a gender component."

## Recent reforms

The RCAF is currently at a major crossroads with respect to reforming its forces, which contributes to the Government's Pentagonal Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency in Cambodia, a political programme and national development strategy, whose phase 1 was released in 2023. This strategy lists reform of the RCAF as one of the outcomes needed to achieve national strategic objectives. It states that the RGC is strongly committed to military reform with the goal of modernizing the Armed Forces, so it has "appropriate size and quality to be able to defend the country in wartime and peacetime." The ultimate objective of the reforms is to strengthen the capacity, efficiency and quality of public services to raise public confidence in government and respond to the needs and aspirations of the people and business community.

Continuing from the Rectangular Strategy<sup>16</sup>, the Pentagonal Strategy (Phase I) emphasizes: 1) strengthening of oversight, management and network; 2) development of human resource and enhancement of Armed Forces' capacity through better training, utilization of technology and building succeeding forces; 3) strengthening the capacity to maintain security, encouraging personnel and their families to relocate to areas along the borders, fighting terrorism to ensure peace and development along border areas and national safety without the threat of terrorism; 4) strengthening international cooperation, especially within the UN peacekeeping framework; and 5) creating a supportive environment for infrastructure development, environment and natural resource protection, interventions during national disasters, humanitarian operations and participation in agriculture harvesting.

Another strategy, Building the Foundation Toward Realizing the Cambodia Vision 2050, stresses the importance of reforming "education, vocational skills... virtue, morality, patriotism and sense of responsibility, health and physical fitness, women's roles and social protection" and to implement "allowance scheme for pregnant women." According to this document, the strategic objective of the RGC during the Sixth Legislature 2018-2023 was to: strengthen "women's dignity and Cambodian family and legal service for women and children"; mainstream "gender equity in policy frameworks and the national development plan"; reduce the "gender gap in education, vocational training and civil service... reduce domestic violence and sexual abuse against women and children," and to improve "women's role in the society through enhancing their capacity and the proportion of women within leadership roles at both national and sub-national levels, in ministries-institutions, both in political and technical positions."

## b. Cambodia's Contribution To Peace Operations

As a testimony to peace, on 1 March 2005 the RGC accepted the request of the UN Secretary-General to participate in humanitarian peacekeeping operations. On 12 March 2006, Cambodia deployed the first demining contingent, which comprised 135 well-trained, experienced and determined personnel to the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS).

Up to February 2024, 9,197 Cambodian peacekeepers, including contingent UN Military Observers (MOs) and Staff Officers (SOs), among them 722 (8%) women, have contributed to 11 missions in 9 countries, namely Sudan, Chad, South Sudan, Syria, Lebanon, Mali, Central African Republic-CAR,

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<sup>16</sup> a political program and national development strategy released by the government. The latest phase was the rectangular strategy phase 4 released in 2018: <https://www.khmersme.gov.kh/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Rectangular-Strategy-Phase-IV.pdf>

Cyprus, and Yemen. Cambodia currently deploys four contingents to three UN missions: one each to the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), and the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and two to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) ended and all Cambodian peacekeepers executed the order to withdraw and safely returned home on 16 November 2023. Since 2007, Cambodia has deployed at least 100 female peacekeepers each year, with that number expected to increase to meet the yearly UN target.

**The five pillars of Cambodian peacekeeping are:**

- SOs and MOs, who are proficient in the military profession and in foreign languages such as English and French, as well as knowledgeable in information technology and topography. These officers operate at missions' central headquarters and at the positions of troop contributing countries. Apart from their assigned duties, these officers also communicate, coordinate, and share information between UN HQ missions and between missions and Cambodia.
- Humanitarian activities in health care, including diagnostics, care, and treatment for peacekeepers, civilian staff, and locals in the host country.
- The MP contingent, which is responsible for law enforcement, cracking down on crimes, and protecting UN VIPs.
- The engineering contingent, which is tasked with horizontal and vertical construction, including building bridges, roads, campsites and airfields, drilling wells, etc.
- Mine clearance activities, which include demining, ordinance disposal, disarmament of roadside improvised explosive devices to ensure safety of UN forces and local populations. The EOD contingent joins operations responding to reports of explosive devices, and takes part in convoy escorts of the UN and other international organizations.

The Kingdom of Cambodia supports the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping.<sup>17</sup> Cambodia is committed to “the Secretary-General’s vision for reforming the peace and security pillar of the UN Secretariat and his commitment to improving the ability of the UN to deliver on its mandate through management reform, which will enhance the impact of peacekeeping.”<sup>18</sup> Additionally, from 2009 to 2017 the Kingdom of Cambodia actively participated in the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) training exercises, an initiative of former US President George W. Bush that aims to fill in training gaps and promote and sustain effective global peacekeeping operational capability.

Recently, the RCAF has emphasized its contribution to peacekeeping operations around the world.<sup>19</sup> Under the leadership of General Sem Sovanny, the Training and Mine Unexploded Ordinance Clearance Center (TMCC) was formally established by the RGC on 10 May 2006 to train and serve as the executive branch of the NCC to deploy troops to UN peacekeeping missions globally. Following the remarkable increase in UN peacekeeping mission deployment of Cambodian troops, on 2 February 2009 the RGC decided to promote TMCC to the NPMEC. Besides taking part in UN peacekeeping operations, NPMEC also plays an important role in domestic mine clearance operations, mine risk education, victim assistance programmes, and national disaster response.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See <https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/a4p-declaration-en.pdf>.

The Kingdom of Cambodia is also a signatory of the Ottawa Treaty, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, and an active member in mine action. Indeed, the RCAF has been actively involved in both domestic and international mine clearance missions to reduce the casualty rate from mines and unexploded ordinances and support humanitarian missions and the development of local infrastructure projects. Furthermore, the RCAF regularly takes part in explosive ordinance risk education. In addition to deploying to UN peacekeeping missions, the NPMEC is also a mine clearance operator, amongst other operators in Cambodia, clearing mines to repurpose land for settlement, agricultural production and other social infrastructure such as schools, bridges, roads, and hospitals.

In addition, NPMEC has been actively cooperating with ministries and related institutions, such as the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation, the Ministry of Rural Development, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology, and the Ministry of Mines and Energy, in infrastructure development. In this regard, NPMEC employed contingent personnel and trainees, prior to their UN peacekeeping mission deployment, and has built concrete bridges, gravel roads, dirt roads, bailey bridges, pagodas, lecture halls, medical centres, schools, markets, solar-powered lights, and ponds. Furthermore, it also planted trees and provided medical care and vaccinations for locals free of charge during the COVID-19 period as part of the Government's response. In addition, NPMEC donated to those in need, such as pregnant women, new mothers, the elderly, and the poor, in many provinces including Kandal, Mondulhiri, Kampong Speu, Pursat, Battambang, and Siem Reap.

NPMEC has also increased international cooperation with partner countries such as the United States (US), China, France, India, Japan, Australia, and many others to learn best practices and innovations. The US has provided support to Cambodia's Blue Helmet force in the form of funding, equipment, techniques, and materials. China has continued to provide military instructors and equipment to help train RCAF on mine clearance in Cambodia as well as opportunities to attend training in China. Counting both domestic and overseas training, China has sponsored 12 courses, including materials and equipment, with 260 Cambodian trainees. Since 2009, France has trained personnel, including MP, MOs and SOs, in 78 domestic and overseas courses, such as French language and EOD. France also provided technical support (via trainers) and material support to ASEAN and regional technical demining training initiatives. Since 2008, India has trained several personnel at demining and EOD courses in India. To help transform NPMEC into a polytechnic, India also helped create the mine demining dogs (MDD) unit by training 15 NPMEC trainees and providing equipment, as well as 15 dogs. Some of these MDDs are now deployed to MINUSCA. Since 1992, Japan has been among the top donors to Cambodia, including in national development, from which NPMEC has benefited in the form of engineering and peacekeeping training courses. Presently, Australia provides English training courses through the National Defence University to the Cambodian Blue Helmet force to prepare individuals for deployment.

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<sup>18</sup> Kingdom of Cambodia, Permanent mission to the UN, "Statement by His Excellency Mr. Ouch Borith, Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia", High-level event on action for peacekeeping. New York, 25 September 2018.

<sup>19</sup> Kingdom of Cambodia, National Defence Policy, 2022.

<sup>20</sup> <https://npmec.mil.kh/>.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

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### a. Overview Of The MOWIP Assessment Methodology

The MOWIP methodology is a unique tool to assess and improve women's meaningful participation in peace operations. It provides a systematic and comprehensive framework for identifying both a security institution's existing good practices and possible improvements in each of 10 issue areas identified as central to women's meaningful participation. Many relevant factors are not limited, however, to the specific context of women's participation in UN deployments. Rather, they reflect how women and men are treated in the security institution more broadly. While the MOWIP methodology has a specific focus on UN peace operations, the good practices and possible improvements that it identifies can benefit the security institution in a much wider sense.

The 10 issue areas discussed below include all the factors that shape the numbers and nature of women's participation in peace operations, from initial recruitment into the security Institution to deployment on mission. These factors can be either positive (good practices at the institutional level that contribute to women's meaningful participation) or negative (barriers to women's meaningful participation at the institutional level). For each issue area, the MOWIP methodology uncovers whether and to what extent it constitutes a barrier or an opportunity. Its main objectives are to:

- Provide a comprehensive set of issue areas within a given security institution that could be improved to increase women's meaningful participation in UN peace operations;
- Identify the good practices within the security institution that can be leveraged, scaled up, and/or disseminated more broadly;
- Apply a set of tools and a comprehensive list of indicators to measure the importance of each issue area for increasing women's meaningful participation in the security institution;
- Determine the differential impact of each issue area in the security institution.

The MOWIP methodology comprises three components. The fact-finding form (FFF) contains approximately 200 questions designed to collect qualitative and quantitative data from official sources about deployment to UN peace operations from the country and institution being assessed. These components are used to fill out a comprehensive and vetted list of indicators that determine the importance of each barrier within the Cambodian context.

Once the first draft of the FFF was completed, remaining data gaps were filled through 14<sup>21</sup> interviews with key decision-makers from within the institution as well as relevant ministries. The interviews utilized a consent form. The sample of the form provided by the Cornell GSS Lab was adapted to be acceptable to the local culture and the national protocol while maintaining critical ethical and technical elements. All interviewees consented to the use of what they said in direct quotations anonymously.

Leaders targeted for interviews were those who bear responsibilities in at least one of the following categories:

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<sup>21</sup> The original plan was to interview at least 20 target leaders, but the team could complete only 14 interviews. The main reason for the shortcoming was the unavailability of some national leaders due to a transition process and restructuring in the new Royal Government of Cambodia.

- A) Decision-making about peace operations (civilian or military leaders);
- B) Decision-making, peace operation deployment, and force generation (military leaders);
- C) Decision-making related to training and preparation;
- D) Decision-making about peace operation deployment and force generation (Police/Gendarmerie).

The third component of the methodology is a two-three hour survey. The sample included 438 total personnel, of which 43% were women and 57% were men. Moreover, 56% of the sample had previously deployed to a mission. Of the total women in the sample, 23% had previously deployed.

In the assessment, each issue area is colour coded. Red indicates areas that constitute the most significant barriers and green indicates areas of opportunity. The survey data is compared to the data from the FFF to look for inconsistencies between institutional reforms and policies and actual experiences and perceptions of Armed Forces personnel. The results of the analysis will be presented and vetted during the validation process with the security institution.

The MOWIP methodology therefore produces robust and evidence-based findings drawing on perspectives from within the institution, the knowledge acquired by the assessment team, as well as from national and international experts who have an academic background in gender and peace operations. It can be used to provide transformative, evidence-based recommendations that effectively target the root causes that prevent uniformed personnel, particularly women, from deploying to peace operations. Using a common methodology across many troop- and police-contributing countries also allows for the identification of universal barriers that need to be addressed at the UN level, and highlights good practices that can be shared and adapted to other contexts.

## **b. The national research institution**

The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS) is a Cambodian non-government organization (NGO) working in the field of peacebuilding and conflict transformation in Asia. Its mission is to strengthen strategic intervention in armed conflict with the overall goal of reaching sustainable and positive peace in the region. CPCS is home to a range of interconnected programmes and initiatives that are informed by ongoing analysis and consultation with a myriad of local partners from the places where CPCS works, including Myanmar, the Philippines, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka. CPCS conducts research and delivers resources that are not available within communities, thus not competing with local organizations. Being based in Cambodia also allows CPCS to bring participants of its interventions out of their countries when hosting programmes, allowing for more freedom to critically reflect on their context and develop strategies for moving forward towards peace.

CPCS focuses on demand-driven interventions that are informed by critical analyses and tailored to the needs of stakeholders within their conflict contexts. To enhance the sustainability of outcomes, CPCS prioritizes long-term accompaniment over one-off programmes. Through this approach, CPCS expands safe spaces and creates platforms for dialogue and understanding, which are essential for establishing mutual trust and an environment conducive for transforming conflict. CPCS also works to build relationships with key individuals and institutions directly involved in peace processes, as well as key actors driving or influencing conflicts. These relationships provide a myriad of perspectives on conflict dynamics as well as opportunities to support and strengthen locally led efforts. New projects are frequently identified through feedback from these partners and are designed to fill identified gaps, strengthen conflict transformation approaches, or to bring

together key actors to develop new strategies for reducing conflict.

UN Women Cambodia has contracted with CPCS to lead the implementation of the research using the MOWIP methodology, in close collaboration with NPMEC. The Cornell GSS Lab and Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) are providing the methodology, tools and training, as well as preliminary analysis of the data. CPCS provided the lead research and recruitment of the research team for collecting data, preparing the draft report, and coordinating with UN Women on the validation process, including presentation of findings to the RCAF and preparation of a final report in accordance with MOWIP templates.

The assessment team was composed of 1 lead researcher leading the research process, conducting key decision-maker interviews and serving as a resource for the entire team (from CPCS), 1 enumerator team of 15 people (5 are women), 1 interview team composed of 4 researchers experienced with peacekeeping forces (3 of them women), and 1 FFF team of 3 people (1 woman). All members of the assessment team are Cambodian and were selected by CPCS after screening their resumes.

### **c. Implementing the MOWIP in the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces**

The methodology was implemented according to MOWIP guidelines. The FFF was conducted by NPMEC. The team began working on the FFF on 13 February 2023 and finished on 12 April 2023. The workload (11 worksheets) was distributed amongst team members, and weekly review sessions were held to report on progress and unblock any issues. The FFF team also collaborated with the survey and interview teams to ensure all questions, especially difficult ones, were answered with appropriate references.

The survey considered different factors suggested by the methodology, including ethnicity, years of experience, rank and position. However, despite efforts to achieve 50% women, the sample includes more men than women, as there was a limited pool of potential female survey respondents. The project mitigated this challenge by considering all the possible women respondents in the sampling pool. The survey should not be treated as a representative survey of the RCAF, but from the results it is possible to make generalizations about women, men, those who have deployed, and those who have not.

Survey localization was done as part of the two-week training conducted by the Cornell GSS Lab in December 2022.<sup>22</sup> All 400+ questions were reviewed line by line by the project enumerator team and CPCS lead researcher to ensure correct vocabulary, grammar, terminology, and tone of the questions and answers. The research team began by adapting the standard MOWIP research tools for use in Cambodia. The Cornell GSS Lab created an initial draft of the survey. CPCS and its subcontractor East West Management Institute translated the first draft of the interview questions for key decision-makers into Khmer.

The survey questionnaires were further refined through two days of pilot surveys to validate the translated questions and answers as well as their comprehensibility. In preparation for the survey, the lead enumerators and trainers worked for three days to localize the 334 pages of questions to give the country team the opportunity to exclude questions or language that might be too sensitive.

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<sup>22</sup> The trainers also explained the structure and the rationale of the 20 interviews of key civilian and military decision-makers, who are primarily responsible for peace operations deployment.



The group had robust discussions about specific language and appropriate ways to ask questions. On 20 December 2022, the enumerators began to carry out the contextualized survey developed in the training. The surveys were conducted in Khmer, using tablets, and uploaded into the centralized data system. Each survey took more than three hours. The initial interviews required long distance travel, as the surveys were conducted at the PKO in Kampong Speu. Enumerators began their days at about 6 AM, as they needed to depart Phnom Penh by 7 AM, returning to the city at around 6 PM. The team used some open classrooms for the survey to keep the entire team somewhat close and to ensure easy access to bathroom facilities, but there was a concern over respondent privacy so they moved a few pairs of respondents into classrooms. Although the team used open classrooms, the survey area was sectioned off and only those participating were allowed inside. The enumerators conducted 30 interviews per day, for a total of 240 surveys with respondents, who were then preparing to deploy to the MINUSCA (EOD and engineering contingents), and UNIFIL peacekeeping missions.

**Table 2: Sample distribution of the survey – Force name**

Force name	No of surveys	Percentage
Army	389	89%
Navy	5	1%
Air Force	4	1%
Gendarmerie	31	7%
Other	9	2%
Total	438	100%

**Table 3: Sample distribution of the survey – Gender and deployment**

Gender and deployment	Number of surveys	Percentage
Male	249	57%
Female	189	43%

**Table 4: Sample distribution of the survey - Deployment**

Deployment	Number of surveys	Percentage
Deployed	247	56%
Not deployed	191	44%

**Table 5: Sample distribution of the survey – Deployed/ Not deployed**

Gender and Deployment	Number of surveys	Percentage
Male deployed	148	34%
Female deployed	99	23%
Male not deployed	101	23%
Female not deployed	90	21%

The key-decision-maker interviews were conducted at the interviewees' offices at the permitted date and time.

As proposed by the CPCS lead researcher, four sets of questions for direct interviews were prepared for these high-profile decision-makers, categorized by their roles in peacekeeping, as follows:

- A. Civilian leader(s) responsible for decisions about peace operations (senior staff for peacekeeping at the Ministries of Defence, Interior/Home Affairs and Foreign Affairs, etc.);
- B. Military officer(s) responsible for decision-making about peace operation deployments and force generation;
- C. Police officer(s)/Gendarmerie responsible for decision-making about peace operation deployments and force generation;
- D. Trainer(s)/Leader(s) at the national peacekeeping training centre.

NPMEC requested approval from the MoFAIC, National Coordination Committee (NCC), MoD, and Army HQ for access to the locations by research/interviewer team and preferable time slots for high ranking Government officials throughout the data collection phase outlined in the RCAF MOWIP project plan. Between January and April 2023, the project completed 14 interviews, as detailed below.











- One from the MoD (Secretary of State);
- One from the NCC for UN peacekeeping mission deployment;
- Eight from the NPMEC (including the Director General and five Deputy DGs);
- Two from the MoWA (Secretary of State and Under Secretary of State);
- One from the Permanent Mission of Cambodia to the UN (Military Advisor).

The interviews with key civilian and military decision-makers, who are primarily responsible for peace operations deployment, have been audio recorded and transcribed for data analysis in collaboration with the Cornell GSS Lab. As for the interview team, the main challenge was getting approval and fixed dates and times for the interviews. The more senior the interviewee the more difficult that was, especially when the data collection phase coincided with the Cambodian general election period.

Final data collection was done via a focus group discussions (FGDs). To select participants for the focus groups, the women focal point at the NPMEC was sent a written request for women officer participants. NPMEC then selected female UN mission deployed officers with different ranks and peacekeeping experience. Participants represented a range of military ranks, from Chief Warrant Officer (most junior officer rank) to Lieutenant Colonel, with various deployment histories, skills, technical and administrative experience, and responsibilities. For the focus groups, CPCS conducted two days of discussions with nine women peacekeepers. The groups were led by two facilitators, one female and one male, and reviewed and commented on the key findings for all 10 issue areas.

### 3. The 10 issue areas shaping women’s participation in peace operations in the security institution

**Table 6: The 10 issue areas shaping women’s participation in peace operations in the security institution**

Pre-deployment stage, including factors that affect force generation			Cross-cutting issue areas	
	<b>1</b>	<b>ELIGIBLE POOL</b> Are there enough women in national institutions?		
	<b>2</b>	<b>DEPLOYMENT CRITERIA</b> Do criteria match the skills needed in operation?	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
	<b>3</b>	<b>DEPLOYMENT SELECTION</b> Does everyone have a fair chance to deploy?	<b>GENDER ROLES</b> Do preconceived attitudes about women preclude their ability to deploy?	<b>SOCIAL EXCLUSION</b> Are women treated as equal members of the team?
	<b>4</b>	<b>HOUSEHOLD CONSTRAINTS</b> Are there arrangements for families of deployed women?		
<b>Deployment stage: including conditions for women during peace operations</b>				
	<b>5</b>	<b>PEACE OPERATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE</b> Are accommodation and equipment designed to meet women’s needs?		
	<b>6</b>	<b>PEACE OPERATIONS EXPERIENCES</b> Do positive and negative experiences in operations affect women’s deployment decisions?		
<b>Post-deployment stage: including factors that affect redeployment</b>				
	<b>7</b>	<b>CAREER VALUE</b> Do deployments advance women’s careers?		
<b>All stages</b>				
	<b>8</b>	<b>TOP-DOWN LEADERSHIP</b> Do leaders at all levels support women’s deployment?		

#### Priority



High



Medium



Low



## ISSUE AREA 1: ELIGIBLE POOL

Medium

The eligible pool issue area explores whether there are enough women in the RCAF to meet the UN Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy targets for 2028: (25% for MOs and SOs and 15% for military contingents).<sup>23</sup>

Some information was missing concerning the exact number of members in the RCAF, disaggregated by gender (female and male). Consequently, the overall ranking of this issue area may be higher or lower. The information presented here is based on the information that the research team had access to.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

#### Opportunities

Information about enlisting in the Armed Forces is available to women, however they mostly learn about these opportunities through their families. Social media is also a promising avenue to attract new female recruits.

The RCAF has engaged in targeted campaigns to recruit more women.

#### Main Barriers

- There are few women in the RCAF, and very few in leadership positions.
- RCAF facilities are perceived as inadequate and do not clearly accommodate women. 29% of the sample, (38% of women and 23% of men), identified at least one facility within the institution that they perceive as inadequate. Women are significantly more likely to identify more inadequate facilities in the security institution than men.
- Women are less likely to have access to equipment. In particular, uniforms do not fit women's bodies. While 98% of men indicated that their uniform always or sometimes fits their body, 78% of women expressed a similar experience.
- Delays in payments from the military institution affect more women. 19% of respondents, (28% of women and 14% of men), indicated that payment from the military institution had been delayed. These delays have consequences for family life.

#### Key recommendations

- Identify best practices and new pathways to improve recruitment drives and replicate these in future recruitment drives to increase the enlistment of women officers in the RCAF.
- Improve recruitment campaigns to increase the enlistment of women police officers in the RCAF.
- Continue strengthening policies to ensure women have access to training and leadership opportunities.
- Improve RCAF infrastructure and equipment to meet the needs of women (e.g. uniforms).
- Expedite the military maternity uniform and avail it for all pregnant personnel.
- Include women within promotion boards, selection/nomination committees, and recruitment committees.

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<sup>23</sup> See UN Department for Peace Operations, 'Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018-2028,' available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/uniformed-gender-parity-2018-2028.pdf>.

- Permit staff rotation within different departments/platoons. There should be opportunities for department/platoon change and this information should be disseminated to women across all existing branches/departments/platoons/units so they are aware of opportunities and encouraged to participate.

## Opportunities

Women are more likely to hear about opportunities to join the RCAF through private means, especially the family. Social media also plays an important role, particularly for women.

Women are more likely to find out about or are encouraged to join the Armed Forces through private channels, such as family members. Survey results suggest that most personnel learn about joining the Royal Cambodian Armed/Police Forces through private means, i.e., family or friends.

There are some notable gendered differences between how men and women joined the RCAF. For women, the role of family is crucial (50%), in addition to social media (38%) and friends (25%). For men, family comes first (36%), followed closely by personal research (29%) and friends (26%). The role of social media is more important for women (38%) than their male counterparts (19%).

Recognizing that family networks are most important for women joining the forces, the RCAF could do better to recruit women who are not part of these networks. According to an interview, “...some female students want to participate but awareness raising about this is not enough for the moment. When I was in my commune one time, I saw a girl who would like to enter the Ministry of Defence. When we returned several weeks later, I saw her wearing a uniform and she said ‘now I succeeded in my test, and I have become a staff of the Ministry of Defence.’ Maybe this young girl was proud and brave to participate, but [ways] to enter something like this [require] raising awareness through a variety of different means of media. Now we have Facebook and TikTok, which will help to get more women.”

In contrast, men are more likely to take their own initiative and conduct personal research to find out how to join the Armed Forces. Amongst respondents, 29% of men reported that they conducted their own research compared to only 11% of women. Other public means are also an important channel for information, with 57% of respondents accessing information through them (3% for newspapers, 17% for TV, 8% for radio and 28% for social media). For both women and men, newspapers (3%), radios (8%), school/teacher (3%), or, again, the role of a mentor (7.5%), recruiter (1%) or conscription (1%), (knowing that there is no conscription in Cambodia), do not appear to have played major roles.

**Table 1.1: How did you find out about joining the Cambodian Royal Armed/Police Forces?  
Select all that apply.**

	Male	Female
Family	36%	50%
Friends	26%	25%
Newspaper	2%	4%
TV	20%	15%
Radio	8%	8%
Social Media	19%	38%
School/Teacher	3%	3%
Mentor	8%	7%
Female Recruiter	0%	2%
Male Recruiter	2%	1%
I did the research to find out how to join	29%	11%
Conscription	2%	1%

**There have been some attempts to recruit women into the RCAF**

At the national level, the MoD recruits new officers and "successive" officers every year.<sup>24</sup> The MoD first issues public announcements for officer cadet recruitment. Registration is then open to the general public. The national recruitment campaign selects up to 350 applicants to 4 different programmes.

Both the FFF and validation workshop participants indicated that RCAF recruitment processes have increasingly prioritized women. Validation workshop participants noted that general recruitment advertisements explicitly mention that priority is given to women candidates.

Additionally, there have been specific recruitment drives for women peacekeepers within the past 10 years. NPMEC’s recent annual recruitment campaign, for instance, explicitly targeted women to fill personnel gaps identified in UN deployment and in contingent formation. In 2023, the NPMEC recruitment campaign targeted 25-30 women, 20 of who were successfully recruited. These women are now undergoing training and on stand-by for future deployment.

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<sup>24</sup> Annual MoD recruitment campaigns were temporarily paused in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19.

## Main Barriers

### There are few women in the RCAF and very few in leadership positions

According to interviews, the RCAF is composed of about 4% to 5% women (out of roughly 100,000 personnel) and women represent 9% of the Gendarmerie. Senior leaders stated that a lack of women is the main problem. According to one interviewee, “The strategy [to deploy more women] is to focus on the individual training due to women sometimes have several skills; as in MP force, they are able to do engineering work; to which role we should assign them? So we try to integrate them into all the trainings to reach 50% in our training list... but we don’t have many female officers, so that is one of the challenges we face in recruiting female peacekeepers.”

Only 10% of women in the sample have served in a leadership position as compared to 14% of men. Women in the focus group stated that the lack of training in certain areas, such as landmine training, prevents them from achieving leadership positions. Validation workshop participants indicated that, in both the RCAF and NPMEC, female soldiers are generally of lower rank than men due to differences in educational attainment.

**Table 1.2: Number of women in the Police<sup>25</sup>**

ក.ស្ត្រីនៅក្នុងមុខដំណែងជាស្នងការនគរបាលជាតិ(ថ្នាក់ជាតិ)

ខ.ស្ត្រីនៅក្នុងមុខដំណែងជាស្នងការនគរបាលជាតិ(ថ្នាក់ក្រោមជាតិ)

Women in Police Commissioner Position (National Level)

Women in Police Commissioner Position (Sub-National Level)

មុខដំណែង Position	2016 - 2017		មុខដំណែង Position	2016 - 2017	
	សរុប Total	ស្ត្រី Women		សរុប Total	ស្ត្រី Women
អគ្គស្នងការដ្ឋាននគរបាលជាតិ General Commissariat of National Police	?	178	ស្នងការ Police Chief	?	?
អគ្គភ័ស្តុការ និងហិរញ្ញវត្ថុ General Department of Logistic and Finance	?	108	ស្នងការរង Deputy Police Chief	?	25
បណ្ឌិតសកានគរបាល Police Academy of Cambodia	?	79	ប្រធានអនុកណ្តាល Vice-President	?	?
អគ្គលេខាធិការដ្ឋាន General Secretariat	?	22	អនុប្រធានអនុកណ្តាល Deputy Vice President	?	3
អគ្គ.អន្តរប្រវេសន៍ General Department of Immigration	?	82	នាយកការិយាល័យ Director of Office	?	7
អគ្គ.អគ្គសញ្ញាណកម្ម General Department of Identification	?	38	នាយកការិយាល័យ Chief of Staff	?	90
អគ្គាធិការដ្ឋាន General Department of Inspection	?	13	មេបញ្ជាការ៖ Commander	?	1
ក្រុមប្រឹក្សានីតិកម្ម Legislative Council	?	4	មេបញ្ជាការ៖រង Subordinate Commander	?	4
អាជ្ញាធរជាតិ.ប្រ ជួញដូរមនុស្ស National Authority for Counter Trafficking	?	2	អគ្គាធិការ Director General of General Department of Inspection	?	?
អគ្គ.អគ្គសវនកម្មផ្ទៃក្នុង General Department of Internal Auditor	?	7	អគ្គាធិការរង Deputy Director General of General Department of Inspection	?	16

គ.ចំនួនមន្ត្រីនគរបាលជាស្ត្រី Number of Women as Police Officer

ឆ្នាំ Year	ថ្នាក់ជាតិ National Level	ថ្នាក់ក្រោមជាតិ Sub-National Level	ឧត្តមសេនីយ៍ឯក Lieutenant General	ឧត្តមសេនីយ៍ទោ Major General	ឧត្តមសេនីយ៍ត្រី Brigadier General
2017	533	780	11	7	39

ទិន្នន័យក្រសួងមហាផ្ទៃ ខែមករា ឆ្នាំ២០១៧  
Data: January 2017, Ministry of Interior

<sup>25</sup> Source: Gender Equality Department Working Group. Updated 3 October 2019.



### Some facilities are Inadequate and do not accommodate women

According to the FFF and survey results (99% of survey respondents), there are sleeping facilities for RCAF personnel in Cambodia. Women are significantly more likely to identify inadequate facilities than men (see Table 1.3). 29% of the sample, (38% of women and 23% of men) identified at least one facility within the institution that they perceive as inadequate. Table 1.3 shows that women are systematically more likely to consider facilities as inadequate: the percentage is 10% more for uniforms, 9% more for equipment and health facilities, 8% more for bathrooms, 5% more for dining, and 3% more for sleeping quarters and office space. Importantly, health facilities provided by the RCAF are considered inadequate only by women (9%). The only facilities that personnel view as adequate are sleeping facilities.

Women’s perception of inadequate facilities is likely due to the design of infrastructure and facilities as gender neutral, and not accommodating their specific needs. Also, women may not feel comfortable using facilities that may be located in difficult to access spaces and/or not be socially inclusive. Focus group participants stated a strong preference for separate spaces for women. According to validation workshop participants, facilities, including bathrooms, are lacking for women, “When out on a patrol, we cannot go to the restroom along the road and there are no mobile toilets. In the mission, female and male restrooms are next to each other without clear separation; sometimes we can see each other. It is not convenient even to use the restrooms.” A female peacekeeper shared her experience, “In the patrol team, I was the only woman and when I needed to go to the toilet at the field, there was no specific toilet for women and no separate toilet for women and men. If we have a fixed mission, it is OK but a mobile mission is hard for women.”

**Table 1.3: Inadequate facilities**

What types of facilities/equipment provided by the RCAF, if any, do you find INADEQUATE? Select all that apply	Women	Men
Bathrooms	9%	1%
Sleeping quarters	4%	1%
Office space	4%	1%
Dining	6%	1%
Recreational space	19%	17%
Uniforms	12%	2%
Health facility	9%	0%
Equipment	15%	6%
No facilities/equipment were inadequate (all were adequate)	62%	77%

### Women are less likely to have access to equipment

Additionally, women are less likely to say that they have equitable access to equipment to do their job. According to the survey results, 93% of women and 97% of men said that they are given equitable access to equipment to do their job. While this is a high percentage, there are gendered

considerations to take into account, such as whether or not this equipment accommodates gendered needs. The FGDs highlighted that personal protective equipment is made only for men. Usually, there is no consideration of the differences between men and women when it comes to equipment.

Another clear example is uniforms. 89% of survey respondents indicated that their uniform fits their body. However, women were significantly less likely to say so. While 98% of men indicated that their uniform always or sometimes fits their body, 78% of women expressed a similar experience. This means that women, as compared to men, often end up using uniforms that do not fit their body, which is a clear example of how equipment is not equitable. Validation workshop participants confirmed that uniforms and boots provided by the RCAF are inadequate. As one woman said, “The smallest size did not fit my body — it was too big; there are women who are even smaller than me! We also need to adjust the boot — 38 is the smallest, it is quite big for our feet. We need applicable boots that fit our feet better.” Another woman recounted, “If we want to encourage women, it is important that [the RCAF] consider the sizes of uniforms. The smallest size for men cannot be the smallest for women. We have not been taken into consideration. It should be considered to provide us with the smallest sizes. I used to propose this issue in meetings, that the Government should consider this, other female Armed Forces also experience this. Some are smaller than me.”

In addition, 88% of total respondents, (90% of women and 86% of men) said that uniforms provided for peace operation never accommodate religious/traditional clothing and 12% of women find the uniform provided by the RCAF inadequate (compared to 2% of men).

### **Delays in payments from the military institution affect women more than men**

19% of total respondents, (28% of women and 14% of men), indicated that their payment from the military institution had been delayed. Women are statistically significantly more likely to say so. Women at the validation workshop also emphasized issues with delays, including the pressure it puts on women who support their families, as they need to borrow money from relatives to accommodate the delays. In other words, payment delays make women financially dependent on others to survive.

It is important to note that when questioned during the validation workshop, participants explained that RCAF payments are typically on time, but payment from the UN can be delayed due to bureaucratic reasons. UN salaries are disbursed every three months but they face some delays when there are complications with inspection of contingent owned equipment or administrative and financial processes in Cambodia.

We recommend that NPMEC/RCAF explore unique ways to ensure personnel do not face delays in payment, particularly to avoid the disenfranchisement of women officers in the RCAF. This might consist of establishing a fund that personnel can withdraw money from, which they will pay back once their UN salary is paid in full.



## ISSUE AREA 2: DEPLOYMENT CRITERIA

High

The deployment criteria issue area examines whether women can meet the requirements for deployment to the same extent as men. It also assesses the skills that are valued and the skills that personnel believe they possess. Gendered differences in perceptions about skills indicate what is valued and what is not valued.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

#### Opportunities

- Men and women were aware of important criteria and skills necessary for deployment such as physical fitness tests, medical tests, speaking English, and communications and interpersonal skills.
- Nearly a third of respondents believed that gender sensitivity was needed for deployment and 40% believed they had those skills. Women were more likely than men to place higher value on this skill.

#### Main barriers

- Men and women believe that different skills are necessary for the mission. Men believed that “harder” skills, such as combat, were necessary and women believed that ‘softer’ skills were necessary, e.g., communication and listening skills. This leads to creating gendered divisions of labour while on mission and also prioritizes ‘hard skills’ over ‘soft skills’ even though both are necessary for peacekeeping effectiveness.
- Personnel are not aware of and did not believe they meet some requirements for deployment, with women less likely to believe they meet the age and RCAF service experience requirements.
- Disciplinary records are necessary for deployment, but not all personnel are aware of or knew about this requirement.
- The majority of respondents (72% total — 73% of men and 69% of women) were aware of the driving skills required for deployment. Yet, few (42%) believe they have the driving skills needed on a mission. Women (35%) were less likely than men (46%) to believe they have this skill. This is consistent with the finding that women (46%) were significantly less likely than men (79%) to have a driver’s license, which makes them less competitive for training and deployment. Many respondents did not believe they have skills to speak the host country’s language. Only 18% of surveyed personnel, (19% of men and 16% of women), said they have the skills to speak the local language.
- Pre-deployment training is required, but this training does not adequately address some of the required skills needed for deployment (e.g., driving skills). For example, driving skills are required to pass the driving exam, yet only a slight majority of personnel with deployment experience (52%) believe they possess the driving skills needed for a mission.

#### Key recommendations

NPMEC/RCAF should:

- Allow and encourage personnel to participate in training opportunities to improve other skills beyond those that are specific to unit deployment. NPMEC/RCAF should consider a protocol change to allow personnel to attend training sessions that focus on skills outside their

assigned duties on mission. This will help cultivate a cultural norm where this type of supplemental training is encouraged within the RCAF and help with career advancement.

- Improve education about the requirements for deployment. If officers are not aware of the requirements, or believe that the requirements are beyond their capabilities, they may be reluctant to volunteer. Senior officers should talk openly about deployment and training opportunities with personnel and encourage both men and women to participate.
- Require pre-deployment technical and practical training on driving skills for all personnel (i.e., do not limit driving training to contingent personnel, extend 4X4 vehicle training to MOs and SOs).
- Require leaders to take annual gender training and awareness courses to help inform and deter reliance on traditional gender stereotypes within the RCAF.
- Explore creative options to subsidize the cost of additional training that will help improve certain skills, such as driving, which peacekeepers lack but require to pass the pre-deployment driving exam. Given funding concerns, this might include mobilizing existing donors to provide complementary international training (e.g., request the UN to provide training on driving, operating heavy equipment, and gender-sensitivity) or develop new partnerships with donors and other countries to secure more access to overseas training, particularly gender-oriented training opportunities.
- Reimburse personnel for the cost of obtaining a valid driver's license and (when applicable) passport.

### Background information about deployment

Prior to each deployment, the UN and Cambodia sign an MoU that details the terms of deployment, number of personnel, logistics arrangements, verification principles, and UN guidelines. Before an MoU is finalized, the UN typically dispatches a team on a pre-deployment visit to assess operational capability and verify if the major equipment and the self-sustainment capabilities to be deployed are in accordance with the MoU. Through this experience, combined with RCAF peacekeeping deployment experience, NPMEC put together the requirements for deployment of each contingent to satisfy personnel needs, contingent needs, and the UN's needs<sup>26</sup>

Criteria for deployment differ for personnel according to whether they deploy as MOs/staff, with battalions, or through secondment. For MO/staff deployment, the UN defers to the TCC to nominate active-duty personnel who fit the following criteria:

- Age 25-55 years
- Minimum 5 years' experience in regular RCAF service
- Rank of Captain or above
- Clean disciplinary record.

In addition to these criteria, the UN requires the following criteria for MO/staff nominees to deploy:

- Valid driver's license
- Medical exam
- Language exams (English & French)

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<sup>26</sup> Department of Operations, Operational Support, "United Nations Manual for the Generation and Deployment of Military and Formed Police Units to Peace Operations", May 2021: <https://docslib.org/doc/168299/united-nations-manual-for-the-generation-and-deployment-of-military-and-formed-police-units-to-peace-operations>.

- Driving skills exam
- Computer skills exam
- There is no small arms/tactical test
- There is no physical fitness test
- There is no local host country language requirement (only English & French).

Contingent members must be 21-50 years old and (typically) rank between Private and Colonel (commander). Officers must undergo a medical examination and be deemed fit for deployment by a medical team at an NPMEC and/or RCAF hospital. Additionally, during pre-deployment training the UN requires contingent members to pass various tests:

- Physical fitness (different requirements for men and women)
- English and French language (specific roles only, e.g., liaison and operations)
- Driving skills
- Small arms/tactical
- Specialization (e.g. mine clearance, engineering, and peacekeeping)
- Clean disciplinary record
- There is no local host country language requirement (only English & French).

Although Cambodia has yet to deploy for UN secondment, there are requirements in place that must be met to qualify for secondment, such as:

- Age 30-55 years
- English language proficiency
- Computer skills exam
- Clean disciplinary record
- There is no small arms/tactical test
- There is no physical fitness test
- There is no local host country language requirement (only English).

All personnel are required to take 6-12 months of pre-deployment training organized by NPMEC unless there are unexpected personal issues or health issues that may prevent them from participating.

## There are specific criteria for deployment to UN Peacekeeping Operations.

For UNMOs, SOs and contingent members, the deployment criteria set by NPMEC are:

- **Age: 25 - 55:** Establishing an age limit is expected to mitigate potential risks associated with declining physical and mental faculties that could compromise the safety of UN military experts on mission and staff officers, as well as the overall success of the mission. The age limit ensures that deployed individuals possess the necessary physical fitness and stamina to fulfil their duties optimally. By striking a balance between experience and physical capability, candidates under the age of 55 are selected, ensuring a pool of qualified personnel who are fit and prepared to serve under demanding conditions.
- **Rank:** Captain to Colonel. A person's rank indicates years of service, experience, and age. For example, a Major would typically have served over 10 years and be aged over 30;
- **Training:** knowledge and skills test during pre-deployment training;
- **UN experience:** This is not to say an applicant has to have UN operational experience. This refers to any kind of exposure to the UN system and peacekeeping;
- **Language and computer skills** for key personnel e.g. liaison officer, logistics, communication officers;
- **Specialized skills exam** e.g. 4x4 driving skill, heavy machine operation, EOD, demining, investigation, speed check, personnel screening and arrest, etc.;
- **Language and computer test;**
- **Physical fitness:** For men: 800m run, long jump, shot put. Women's fitness requirements are about 70-85% of men's requirements. E.g. for a score of 90/100 in long jump, men need 6.20m and women need 4.35m.

MOs & SOs do not typically require physical fitness tests, as long as applicants submit the results of a medical exam and prove to be in good physical condition. The RCAF is responsible to do medical screening of all checklist items for all personnel going on deployment, then submit this to the UN for final decision. However, even after passing NPMEC's requirements, the UN field mission may object or request further actions to be taken to better ascertain the applicant's health condition in order to find them fit for deployment.

- **Medical check:** Dental condition, heart condition, liver condition. Peacekeeping missions often demand physical endurance and the ability to operate effectively in challenging environments.
- **Cognitive abilities and decision-making:** Peacekeeping missions often require quick thinking, sound judgment, and the ability to make critical decisions under pressure. While older individuals may possess valuable experience and expertise, cognitive abilities may decline with age. The age limit of 55 ensures that deployed personnel maintain their cognitive capabilities and can effectively carry out their roles, thereby contributing to the overall success of the mission.
- **Safety and security:** It is not a strong requirement but, recently, to encourage deployment of MOs & SOs below the age of 55, the UN emphasizes four rationales, including safety and security, because younger individuals generally exhibit higher physical resilience and adaptability to changing circumstances.

**Table 2.1: Which of the following do you think are necessary for MOs to have before deploying to a UN peace operation? Select all that apply.**

	Men	Women	Deployed	Not deployed	Total
Medical test	64%	74%	73%	61%	68%
English test	61%	74%	72%	60%	67%
Driver's test	58%	70%	68%	55%	63%
Physical fitness test	51%	63%	58%	54%	56%
Permission from supervisor	57%	52%	53%	44%	49%
Computer test	42%	56%	54%	41%	48%
Written exam	42%	47%	49%	38%	44%
Conflict resolution/ negotiation skills	41%	47%	44%	42%	43%
Oral exam	39%	47%	47%	36%	42%
Personality/character test	39%	46%	44%	40%	42%
Communication/listening/ interpersonal skills	38%	47%	42%	42%	42%
French test	39%	39%	43%	32%	39%
Small arms/tactical test	32%	41%	35%	37%	36%
Disciplinary record	32%	39%	36%	32%	35%
Certain rank	33%	35%	38%	27%	34%
Gender sensitivity	29%	35%	36%	26%	32%
Certain age	29%	35%	34%	27%	31%
Specific number of years in service	14%	24%	19%	17%	18%
Unmarried/no children	1%	4%	2%	3%	2%
None	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%

**Table 2.2: Which of the following do you think are necessary for personnel of a contingent to have before deploying to a UN peace operation? Select all that apply.**

	Men	Women	Deployed	Not deployed	Total
Medical test	86%	89%	89%	86%	88%
Physical fitness test	82%	82%	85%	78%	82%
Driver's test	73%	69%	73%	70%	72%
Permission from supervisor	67%	64%	64%	69%	66%
English test	54%	72%	63%	60%	62%
Small arms/tactical test	62%	59%	62%	59%	61%
Personality/character test	60%	60%	61%	59%	60%
Disciplinary record	63%	52%	61%	56%	58%
Written exam	47%	42%	47%	42%	45%
Oral exam	45%	40%	46%	38%	42%
Certain age	45%	38%	43%	41%	42%
Communication/listening/ interpersonal skills	36%	49%	40%	43%	42%
French test	32%	39%	37%	33%	35%
Conflict resolution/negotiation skills	29%	40%	33%	36%	34%
Gender sensitivity	29%	35%	32%	31%	31%
Computer test	25%	37%	32%	27%	30%
Specific number of years in service	20%	22%	20%	21%	21%
Certain rank	16%	18%	18%	16%	17%
Unmarried/no children	2%	4%	2%	4%	3%
None	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%



**Table 2.3: Please identify which of the skills you have or requirements you believe you meet to deploy to a UN peace operation (select all that apply)**

	Men	Women	Deployed	Not deployed	Total
Ability to speak English	64%	79%	73%	68%	71%
Medical fitness	67%	71%	72%	65%	69%
Physical fitness	60%	65%	63%	61%	62%
Communication/listening/ interpersonal skills	50%	67%	55%	59%	57%
Ability to work with personnel from other countries	59%	53%	56%	56%	56%
Computer skills	47%	56%	52%	49%	51%
Conflict resolution/negotiation skills	47%	45%	43%	50%	46%
Supervisor's permission	44%	46%	47%	42%	45%
Experience with the RCAF	51%	36%	45%	43%	44%
Clean disciplinary record	45%	43%	46%	41%	44%
Combat/tactical skills	47%	39%	39%	48%	43%
Ability to drive a manual car	46%	35%	52%	49%	42%
Appropriate personality/character	44%	38%	45%	36%	41%
Gender sensitivity	38%	43%	39%	42%	41%
Ability to work with the population in the host country	42%	33%	40%	36%	38%
Ability to speak French	36%	24%	31%	31%	31%
Ability to speak the local host country's language	19%	16%	18%	17%	18%
Appropriate age	22%	14%	18%	19%	18%
Minimum rank	6%	7%	8%	4%	6%
Having no family commitments back home	5%	2%	5%	2%	3%

## Opportunities

### **Medical/physical fitness tests are required for deployment and personnel are aware of this requirement**

A physical fitness test is needed for formed unit deployment and most personnel (82%) are aware of this requirement (see Table 2.2 above). However, only 62% of respondents, (60% of men and 65% of women) believed they meet the physical test requirements for deployment (see Table 2.3 above).

The fitness test is different for men and women (see details in text box on page 38). That is why there are no programmes in place to help women achieve the same standards as men. Physical training is available for male and female officers preparing to take part in a peace operation. The pre-admission physical test does not focus on muscular fitness, but on physical condition, e.g. vision, physical handicaps, ability to run and crawl, and so on.

### **Personnel are aware that English language skills are required to deploy and a majority of respondents believe they have the ability to speak English**

The UN requires personnel to pass an English language exam to deploy, and a majority of respondents are aware of this requirement. 67% were aware of the English language skills required to deploy as a MO (Table 2.1), including 61% men and 74% women. 62% of respondents were aware of the English language requirements to deploy as personnel of a contingent (Table 2.2), including 54% men and 72% women.

Table 2.3 shows that 71% of surveyed personnel believe they have the ability to speak English (79% for women and 64% for men). The high percentage of personnel who possess English language skills may be explained by the sustainable strategy implemented by NPMEC to train staff. In particular, in cooperation with Australia it has been systematizing an annual course targeting women in uniform for peacekeeping missions, by organizing several seminars in the NPMEC peacekeeping training centre in Kompong Speu Province, as well as in Australia, which female peacekeepers have been able to join. NPMEC is now engaged with the Australian cooperation office on a Training of Trainers (ToT) programme: they are working to select officers to receive training to become ToT instructors. Also, some training for female peacekeepers has been organized in Malaysia (10 full days of English classes within the Malaysian Peacekeeping Centre) and Italy.

There are also opportunities for women to engage in language training. From one interview, “In terms of language, most of them cannot speak English and French. In terms of language, we have a strong challenge. So we provide more training for women soldiers by targeting specifically women for language courses.” Another senior highlighted opportunities for women to learn French. During the interviews, respondents highlighted the good relations with the French Defence attaché and the two-year French language course sponsored by the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, which takes place at the NPMEC training institute. Another interviewee said, “For this long term course, we targeted women in particular and we had 25 women. Every six months, they have an evaluation in terms of their proficiency. If they pass the test, they continue and go to the next level. Otherwise, they take again the same level. For some, it has been a success: they reach the level B2 quickly and they have been deployed in Mali and the Central African Republic. Others had some family issues and they are still at the A1 level.”

### **People believe they have some necessary skills to deploy**

In addition to assessing which skills are important, it is also necessary to assess which skills people believe they already have. Table 2.3 above represents the level of self-reported readiness for deployment. The skills that reached a majority threshold were English language (71%), medical fitness (69%), physical fitness (62%), communications/interpersonal skills (57%), the ability to work with other countries (56%), and computer skills (51%). This is important because English skills, medical health and physical fitness, and computer skills are required to deploy, and communication/interpersonal skills and the ability to work with other countries are essential skills that peacekeepers need on mission.

### **Women are more likely to say they have communication skills/interpersonal skills**

Table 2.3 shows that women respondents were more likely to say they were confident in their communication/listening/interpersonal skills than men (67% of women and 50% for men). This could be considered a comparative advantage of female officers. According to an interview, “Men also have obstacles. Up to now what we note is: first, some men in the mission areas face more difficulties than women if they have no language knowledge, but it’s fine if they realize it. This is not only those deployed from our country but also from all nations — out of more than 100 countries, only the team heads or leaders know the local language. So it’s really challenging for men as they need to talk to the local citizens there to communicate with them; but for women, although they don’t know the language, their communication is far better as they are quick to understand, are better at explaining, and better at raising testimonies or proofs. Overall, the language barrier is more challenging for men as women are selected more carefully and seriously and most of them know the languages already.” According to another interview, “When they were deployed to perform a demining duty at an area bordering with Lebanon and Israel, the Israel side would point their guns and block them from doing that work; and negotiations were not so effective when they confronted this. So in terms of the communication, we note that men seem to have a weakness compared to women.” This can also indicate that women play a significant role in mediating conflict.

### **Women are more likely to believe they have gender sensitivity skills**

According to Table 2.3, 41% of respondents, (38% of men and 43% of women), felt that they have sufficient gender sensitivity skills for deployment (meaning that 59% of surveyed personnel believed they do not have the necessary gender sensitivity skills to deploy). On the other hand, only 31% of all personnel surveyed stated that the gender sensitivity is necessary for formed unit deployment (Table 2.2) and 32% believe this is required for MO deployment (Table 2.1). While a higher percentage of women stated that these skills are important and/or that they have them, this could lead to a higher propensity for gendered division of labour, where anything related to gender or women is relegated to female soldiers.

## **Main Barriers**

### **Men and women believe that different skills are necessary for missions**

In order for men and women to deploy, they need particular skills. The criteria in Table 2.1 above outlines the required skills, but there are other skills that make peacekeepers more effective in their jobs. What individual men and women believe is important likely drives the opportunities they seek to develop those skills. Thus, it is important to understand how men and women prioritize the skills needed for a peacekeeping mission because this prioritization affects their professional decisions.

The skills people think they need vary depending on the type of mission, i.e., deploying as a MO (Table 2.1) or with a contingent (Table 2.2).

When it comes to skills needed to be a MO (Table 2.1), women were more likely to believe they needed a medical test (74% of women and 64% of men), driving skills (70% of women, 58% of men), physical fitness skills (63% of women, 51% of men), computer test (47% of women and 39% for men), conflict resolution/negotiation skills (47% of women and 41% of men), personality/character test (46% for women and 39% for men), communication/listening/interpersonal skills (47% for women and 38% for men), and small arms/tactical test (41% of women and 32% of men). On the one hand, this is promising because women know the skills they need and they align with the criteria set out by the RCAF and the UN. On the other hand, if women think they must pass all of these tests, this could be an impediment for deployment. Men are less likely to believe they need these particular skills and thus volunteer for positions, whereas women may be more reluctant to do so because they might think they do not have the skills needed to deploy.

What also stands out from Table 2.1, is that women were more likely than men to believe that 'soft skills', such as communication (47% women and 38% men), conflict resolution (47% women and 41% men), gender sensitivity (35% women and 29% men), and personal/character tests (46% women and 39% men) were necessary. The validation workshop confirmed that women are better at gathering information and collaborating: "Women have their own strength. All the coordination work is done by women. We got a lot of checkpoints. Without women, we would not have these. Women facilitate negotiation. The soft skills women have are really important." The FGD confirmed the importance of these types of skills among women. Validation workshop participants also confirmed that women are better information gatherers and collaborators. This means that female personnel are perceived to better perform duties/roles that require 'soft skills'. As a result, men may be less likely to pursue training oriented toward these important skills. This threatens to create gendered divisions within missions as women believe they specialize in 'softer skills', whereas men believe they specialize in 'harder skills'.

When it comes to deploying with a contingent (Table 2.2), there are important gender differences. Men were more likely to believe that harder skills were necessary such as the small arms/tactical test (62% men and 59% women) and a driving test (73% men and 69% women). Women, on the other hand, believed that 'soft skills' were necessary for these types of deployments: computer skills (25% men and 37% women) and English speaking (54% men and 72% women), gender sensitivity (29% men and 35% women), communications/listening skills (36% men and 49% women), and conflict resolution skills (29% men and 40% women). Once again this divide in the 'soft' versus 'hard' skills creates the foundations for gendered divisions of labour while on mission, as well as what is being valued while on deployment. This disadvantages women because they may pursue skills that are less valued even though they are critical for the mission's success.

### **Gender differences in the skills/criteria that personnel believe they have/need to deploy**

Table 2.3 shows that male respondents are more likely to believe they are the appropriate age (22% of men and 14% of women), possess driving skills (46% of men and 35% of women), work well with host populations (42% of men and 33% of women), and have combat and tactical skills (47% of men and 39% of women). Again, men are more likely to believe they have "hard skills." In contrast, women are more likely to believe that they have English language skills (79% of women and 64% of men), gender sensitivity skills (43% of women and 38% of men), computer skills (56% of women and 47% of men), and communication/interpersonal skills (67% of women and 50% of men). These are mostly considered 'soft skills'. This difference in perception could create the foundation for

gendered division of labour while on mission because women believe they possess certain skills and likely would be assigned to tasks that reflect those skills. Moreover, women may be less likely to report that they are skilled in “hard skills” because of gendered differences about what constitutes competence.

During the validation workshop, participants expressed concern about the practical feasibility of diversifying the types of training that personnel take to prepare for a mission. Currently, the type(s) of training (particularly pre-deployment training) that personnel take are explicitly linked to the unit/role that they are assigned to. In other words, the cycle of training is explicitly oriented towards the role(s) personnel are assigned to within pre-existing units, which limits women’s upward mobility within the RCAF. For example, if a woman first deploys as part of an administrative-focused unit, then it is unlikely she will have the opportunity to take training to improve her demining skills because her training courses will focus on improving administrative and computer skills that benefit the unit/mission. We recommend that NPMEC/RCAF allow and encourage personnel to participate in training opportunities to improve skills beyond those that are unit-specific. We suggest that NPMEC/RCAF consider a protocol change to allow personnel to attend trainings that focus on skills outside their assigned duties on mission. This will help cultivate a cultural norm where this type of supplemental training is encouraged within the RCAF.

**Personnel lack awareness of and do not believe they meet some requirements for deployment, with women less likely to believe they meet the age and RCAF service experience criteria**

A majority of surveyed personnel are unaware of some specific criteria required for deployment. For MO deployments (Table 2.1), most respondents did not know about the requirements for the specific number of years in service (18%), age (31%), or rank (34%). For formed unit deployment (Table 2.2), most personnel were not aware of requirements for rank (17%), years in service (21%), or age (42%). If personnel are not aware of these requirements, then it makes it difficult for them to acquire the skills needed for deployment.

In addition to being unaware of these deployment requirements, respondents do not believe they have the appropriate rank, meet the age requirement, or have the necessary service experience with the RCAF to deploy (see Table 2.3). Very few personnel (6%) believe they meet the rank requirement, only 18% believe they are the appropriate age, and 44% believe they have the appropriate level of service experience with the RCAF to deploy. The fact that personnel are generally unaware of age, rank, and RCAF experience requirements needed to deploy may influence beliefs about whether or not personnel fulfil these requirements. In other words, if personnel do not know the requirements, they are unlikely to believe they meet these requirements. Ultimately, if personnel do not believe they meet the minimum requirements to deploy, it is unlikely they will pursue deployment opportunities.

There are also important gendered differences in deployment qualifying beliefs about age and RCAF experience (Table 2.3). A majority of men (51%) believe they have the RCAF experience needed, whereas only 36% of women believe they have this attribute. Men (22%) were also more likely than women (14%) to believe they were the appropriate age to deploy. This means that the majority of women respondents feel that they do not have the necessary RCAF experience nor the appropriate age to qualify for deployment, which may deter them from seeking opportunities to deploy.

We recommend that NPMEC/RCAF improve education about the requirements for deployment. If officers are not aware of the requirements, or believe that the requirements are beyond their capabilities, they may be reluctant to volunteer. Senior officers should talk openly about deployment and training opportunities with personnel and encourage both men and women to participate.

### **Disciplinary records are necessary for deployment, but not all personnel are aware of this requirement**

While 58% of all personnel surveyed (63% of men and 52% of women) were aware that disciplinary records are considered for formed unit deployment (Table 2.2), only 35% of personnel (39% of women and 32% of men) were aware of the disciplinary record requirement for MO deployment (Table 2.1). Only 44% of personnel believe they have the necessary disciplinary record to be able to deploy (Table 2.3), including 43% of the women and 45% of the men. If personnel believe that infractions on their disciplinary record disqualify them from deployment, it is unlikely they will volunteer or seek opportunities to deploy. It may be the case that personnel are simply unaware of the minimum eligibility standards for disciplinary records, which might influence beliefs about whether or not they have the appropriate disciplinary record to deploy. We recommend that NPMEC and/or RCAF work to improve education and recruitment advertising on the requirements in place for disciplinary records to qualify for deployment.

### **Many respondents do not believe they have skills to speak to host country residents**

According to the deployment requirements set by the NPMEC and the UN, personnel must possess English or French language skills to deploy (see Table 2.1). The ability to speak the host country's language is not a required skill for deployment unless it is English or French. Validation workshop participants indicated that it would be useful for personnel to acquire host country language skills, and could even increase the chance of selection for deployment, but it is not required. The UN also provides language assistants in non-English/French speaking missions.

As mentioned, Table 2.3 shows that most personnel believe they possess the required English skills to deploy (71% total, 64% men and 79% women). However, few believe they have the necessary French language skills to deploy (31% total, including 36% men and 24% women). Only 18% of personnel (9% men and 16% women) believe they have the skills needed to speak the local host country's language.

### **Most personnel do not believe they have the driving skills needed to deploy**

Driving skills are required for deployment and a majority of respondents are aware they need driving skills to deploy. 72% of respondents (73% of men and 69% of women) were aware of the driving skill requirements for contingent deployment (Table 2.2) and 63% of personnel (58% men and 70% women) were aware this is a requirement for MO deployment (Table 2.1). Yet, a minority of respondents (42%) believed they have the driving skills needed for deployment (see Table 2.3). Women (35%) were less likely than men (46%) to report they have this skill. This is consistent with the finding that women (46%) are less likely than men (79%) to have a driver's license. This means that women are generally less likely to meet the specific requirements for deployment and are less mobile when deployed.

When deploying as part of a contingent, personnel who are deployed as drivers or officers who need to occasionally drive will undergo driving training of 4x4 manual vehicles. There is currently no annual driving training provided to SOs and MOs. These officers usually get their training as part of a contingent, while undergoing MO and SO courses domestically or overseas, or through their own training. This places women at a disadvantage for these positions because they have less access to any driving training.

We recommend that NPMEC and/or the UN provide technical and practical in-service or international training on driving skills to all personnel (i.e., do not limit driving training to contingents, extend 4X4 vehicle training to UNMOs and SOs). We also encourage NPMEC and/or RCAF to reimburse personnel for the cost of obtaining a valid driver's license. These changes will help increase the eligible pool of personnel who can drive on mission, particularly women, and may also improve the quality of driving skills within the RCAF.

### **Women are less likely to have passports and driver's licenses, which can prevent them from having the same access to opportunities as men**

Women were significantly less likely than men to have a passport. Of those who have not deployed, 13% of men and 25% of women said that they do not have a passport. Women were also significantly less likely to have a driver's license. 35% of personnel (53% of women and 20% of men) said that they do not have a driver's license. Officers may be reluctant to volunteer or gain the skills to deploy on peace operations if they do not have the correct documentation or if they have never left the country. These factors not only contribute to the delay of women's deployment, but they also prohibit women from qualifying for certain training and opportunities that require driving or travel (e.g. international training). Focus group participants stated that sometimes they have to spend their own money to get driver's licenses and passports.

Here it is important to consider that men are expected to drive and travel as they are often considered the family breadwinner. The major hindrance to mobility is the social and cultural norms regarding a driver's license, which may involve gender stereotypes. As one interviewee said, "If one car is available in the house, then only the male would be driving. There is a high chance that male members of the family mostly drive and/or have a driver's license." This is a pattern for both deployed and non-deployed personnel. There are also economic factors at play as many families cannot afford to own a car and motorbikes can be dangerous. This economic barrier is particularly impactful on female personnel from average or below-average socioeconomic groups whose family cannot afford multiple vehicles, therefore the men in the family usually are first to get their driver license. Poorer families, which means poorer women, are particularly disadvantaged from these opportunities. Finally, it is worth noting that in some households that follow old Cambodian traditions, parents can be overprotective of females. Young women are usually not allowed to drive themselves, to reduce risk of kidnapping, rape, traffic accidents, or other injury. These underlying gender and social norms may prevent female officers from acquiring a passport or driver license and could be considered the main barriers to women's mobility for deployment.

During the validation workshop, participants suggested that obtaining a passport should not be a major hindrance for deployment. According to one attendee, "If [personnel] pass the fitness test, a passport is prepared by the MoFAIC prior to their deployment. This is less salient, because passports are provided free of charge; so this is not a major barrier to female participation." Yet, personnel, particularly women, may be unaware that passport fees are automatically covered for those who pass the fitness test. We recommend this policy be widely disseminated amongst all branches of the RCAF and included in advertisement materials used in general RCAF recruitment campaigns as well as those specific to peacekeeping.

Recognizing that both socioeconomic and gender norms limit women's access to vehicles, which prevents them from gaining/developing driving skills, we recommend that NPMEC/RCAF provide additional

in-service training opportunities to improve driving skills. We echo our recommendation that NPMEC/RCAF reimburse personnel for the cost of obtaining a valid driver's license and (when applicable) passport.

### **Most personnel have not participated in supplemental training opportunities**

Although pre-deployment training is required, and all respondents indicated that they fulfilled these training requirements prior to deployment, personnel rarely engage in any other additional/supplemental training opportunities beyond the mandated minimum. This is important because the survey results indicate that even personnel with deployment experience still lack certain skills needed on mission (see Table 2.3). For example, driving skills are required to pass the driving exam, yet only a slight majority of personnel with deployment experience (52%) believe they possess the driving skills needed for a mission. Moreover, only 43% of those with deployment experience believe they have the necessary conflict resolution/negotiation skills for a mission. Personnel with deployment experience also lack the skills needed to work with the host country population. Only 40% of those with deployment experience believed they have the necessary skills to work with the host country population. This suggests that personnel would benefit from additional training beyond the required pre-deployment training.

According to our FFF, NPMEC offers in-service training courses on humanitarian demining, ASEAN regional demining, gender awareness and child protection, and protection of civilians. However, a majority of personnel (52%), including 53% of men and 51% of women, have not engaged in any in-service training. Of those officers who have not deployed, 51% have not taken any in-service training. Amongst personnel with deployment experience, a majority (53%) have not taken any in-service training. We recommend RCAF and/or NPMEC (in coordination with the UN) encourage personnel to enroll in existing in-service training courses, e.g., protection of civilians. We also suggest NPMEC/RCAF consider offering other in-service training courses to improve important skills, e.g., driving skills; languages; computer skills; interpersonal and communication skills; and conflict resolution and negotiation skills.

The RCAF has participated in training conducted in Mongolia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, and Thailand. Cambodia also had the honour to host the multinational peacekeeping operations exercise Angkor Sentinel 2010, with participants from 23 countries in command post exercise (CPX) and 9 countries in field training exercise (FTX).<sup>27</sup> Despite these opportunities, a vast majority of respondents have not participated in international training. 72% of the sample, (66% of men and 79% of women), said that they have not engaged in any international training. Amongst personnel who have not deployed, 77% have not taken any international training. Of those who have deployed, 68% have not taken any international training. We recommend NPMEC/RCAF encourage and fund officers to participate in international training opportunities.

The FFF specifies that gender courses are offered at pre-deployment training, which is supported by our survey results. 93% of survey respondents, (93% of men and 93% of women), said that they have participated in a pre-deployment gender training. Amongst those who have not deployed, 94% said they completed gender training before deploying to their mission. Importantly, the RCAF leadership is prone to recognizing the importance of gender training to enhance personnel's awareness and sensitivity to gender issues. According to interviews, "Another point about gender mainstreaming in the military is our training effort both domestically and overseas to increase awareness on gender mainstreaming policy and related legal

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<sup>27</sup> CPX and FTX are military/peacekeeping exercises that simulate real world scenarios used to train officers and troops on situation handling and operational procedures and decision-making.



framework, and laws for promoting women in the military.” Validation workshop participants confirmed this. We recommend continuing programmes adapted to address women’s specific needs for training, and suggest NPMEC/RCAF encourage both men and women to participate in these specialized training opportunities. During the validation workshop, participants expressed concerns about the availability of funds to sponsor personnel to attend other training courses beyond pre-deployment training. Recognizing this constraint, we suggest NPMEC/RCAF continue to explore creative options to subsidize the cost of additional/supplemental training opportunities. This might include mobilizing existing donors to provide complementary international training. For example, NPMEC/RCAF could request that the UN provide training on driving, operating heavy equipment, and gender-sensitivity. Another idea is that NPMEC/RCAF develop new partnerships with donors and other countries to secure more access to overseas training, particularly gender-oriented training opportunities.



### **ISSUE AREA 3: DEPLOYMENT SELECTION**

Medium

The deployment selection issue area explores whether women are prevented from deploying through lack of information, lack of connections to influential decision-makers and/or because their superiors decide that it is too dangerous for them to deploy.

#### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

##### **Opportunities**

- There are multiple ways individuals can be deployed.
- Men and women spend an equal number of months on deployment.
- Women and men appear to deploy into battalions the same way. 52% of men and 52% of women said they joined a rotating unit/battalion. Women (30%) were just slightly more likely than men (28%) to deploy by joining a newly formed unit/battalion.
- There are diverse ways through which individuals hear about opportunities and experiences in UN peacekeeping missions. Most personnel hear about UN missions through their immediate superiors (68% total, including 69% of men and 66% of women) or social media (48% total, 40% of men and 58% of women).
- Women were not reluctant to deploy to difficult missions. Among women who did not apply to a peacekeeping mission, danger and bad experiences were not reported concerns.

##### **Barriers**

- Men and women have different perceptions about the testing environment, especially around issues involving fairness and societal pressure.
- Personnel spend money on pre-deployment costs. For women and men, this included spending their own money on items necessary to take the pre-deployment test.
- Women and men have different views on the fairness of deployment selection. This is likely because women are less likely than men to volunteer for and be selected to deploy.

##### **Key recommendations**

The RCAF should:

- Pursue a better understanding of the gendered differences with issues in the testing environment, specifically related to cost, fairness and societal pressure. `

- Explore ways to offer support to officers taking the selection exam. A potential solution would be to reimburse officers for food or other small expenses. Or, explore other creative ways to lower/offset the cost of taking the selection exam.
- Increase transparency around UN peacekeeping selection processes to demonstrate the fairness for officers of the standardized process and encourage more officers to apply.

### Background Information about deployment selection

The RCAF does not currently deploy battalions, but they have deployed contingents at company size (three platoons) in the past. Selection to contingents was voluntary. When new recruits are needed for contingent deployment, NPMEC posts public announcements through media and military channels. Interested candidates undergo selection tests, including physical fitness, UN knowledge, and English proficiency exams. Successful recruits would then join a newly-formed unit or one that will rotate in a UN peace operation.

Personnel can also deploy voluntarily as MOs/staff members. MOs/staff are selected from an existing pool of officers who meet the minimum eligibility criteria (Issue area 2). When a new post is available, NPMEC advertises public announcements for candidate applications.

Secondment deployment is not voluntary. Currently, there does not appear to be any standard recruitment process for secondment as there are no secondment positions held by RCAF personnel.

NPMEC/RCAF troops rotate every 12 months, but personnel have the option to request an extension for another year.

## Opportunities

### There are multiple ways personnel can be deployed

Survey respondents were asked to report all the ways they have been able to deploy to a UN peace operation (see Table 3.1). Amongst personnel with deployment experience, a slight majority (52%) said they joined a formed unit/battalion that rotates in a UN peace operation. Slightly less than half of those who have deployed (45%) applied voluntarily, 29% deployed by joining a unit/battalion created to be deployed as part of a UN peace operation, 19% deployed via nomination to serve as a National Support Element,<sup>28</sup> and 16% were selected by a superior without applying. This suggests that there are multiple ways for personnel to participate in peacekeeping operations regardless of their rank and experience level.

### Men and women spend an equal number of months on deployment and deploy an average of two times

Men (28 months) and women (27 months) respondents spent an equal number of months on deployment. Survey results also indicate that men and women are equally likely to deploy an average of two times.

### Women and men are equally likely to deploy into rotating battalions

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<sup>28</sup> NSE or National Support Element refers to senior officers who are deployed to UN missions to support Cambodian contingents under the national framework (a standard implemented by the MoD to allow additional officers—above the UN agreed number—to be deployed within a contingent.) They don't have official positions or belong to the command and control structure of a contingent but play advisory roles especially in technical fields such as medical, demining, legal and engineering services. The RGC is responsible for their allowances.

Women and men appear to deploy into battalions the same way. In our sample, men and women stated in equal numbers that they joined a battalion in rotation. 52% of men and 52% of women said they joined a formed unit/battalion that will rotate in a UN peace operation. Additionally, just slightly more women (30%) than men (28%) said they deployed by joining a newly formed unit/battalion. This suggests that unit deployment is relatively gender equal.

When it comes to forming a contingent, men and women respondents’ experiences appear to be the same. According to an interview, “Strategically, women are the priority. We will keep increasing the number of them year by year. Our strategy is to put 100% women for the gendarmerie force, but it’s not yet possible. But now it’s already reached up to about 48% of women [in] the Military Police.”

**Table 3.1: Select ALL the ways you have been able to deploy to a UN peace operation:**

	Men	Women	Total
I was selected by superiors without applying to be a MO/staff	19%	11%	16%
I applied voluntarily	50%	41%	45%
I joined a formed unit/battalion that will rotate in a UN peace operation	52%	52%	52%
I joined a formed unit/battalion that was created to deploy to a UN peace operation	28%	30%	29%
I was nominated as a National Support Element	20%	16%	19%

**Individuals hear about opportunities and experiences in UN peacekeeping missions in diverse ways**

Table 3.2 shows how respondents hear about opportunities and experiences in UN peacekeeping missions. Men and women hear about UN missions through their immediate superiors (68% total, 69% for men and 66% for women) and through social media (48% total, 40% of men and 58% of women). Other possible information vehicles are word of mouth (30%), TV (24%) and the organization’s newsletter (20%).

Information mentorships, formal professional associations, Internal job boards, organization-wide email or radio do not appear to have played major roles. There are few differences in how men and women access information.

Moreover, it is worth noting that once again, and similar to findings in Issue area 1, women are more likely than men to gain information, including about deployment opportunities, through social media. According to an interview, “For the time being, we have social media which plays a very important role for women. So people are well aware of the female peacekeepers while working in a mission or they know that they are safe and they know what they are doing, what they are working at, and that will also attract them. That will change their mindset to participate in the UN mission. So I think

there’s knowledge they need that we have to provide the training to the women and to make them aware about the importance of their participation in the peacekeeping mission....” This suggests that social media is an important avenue to spread positive information and recruit women into the RCAF.

**Table 3.2: In what ways have you seen information about opportunities and experiences in UN peacekeeping missions? Select all that apply.**

	Men	Women	Total
Organization-wide email	13%	10%	11%
Organization’s newsletter	20%	21%	20%
TV	24%	23%	24%
Radio	4%	9%	6%
Social media	40%	58%	48%
Internal job board	7%	11%	9%
Word of mouth	29%	32%	30%
Formal professional associations	1%	2%	1%
Training academies	17%	18%	17%
Informal mentorships	7%	6%	6%
Immediate superiors	69%	66%	68%
None	0%	3%	1%

**Women are not reluctant to deploy to difficult missions**

Among women in the sample who were never deployed, danger and bad experiences were not among their concerns. Not a single woman reported danger as a reason for not applying to deploy. Only one woman in the sample reported hearing about a bad experience, which prevented her from applying for deployment. This means that women are not necessarily having negative experiences on mission nor do such experiences by other women affect their decisions.

**Main barriers**

**Women are significantly less likely to deploy by applying voluntarily or via selection by a superior**

Table 3.1 shows that women respondents were significantly less likely to say they deployed by applying voluntarily (50% of men versus 41% of women). Officers who disclosed they did not volunteer for deployment were asked why they did not volunteer. Personnel cited four reasons why they did not volunteer to deploy: did not know about the opportunity to volunteer for deployment; did not know deployment was voluntary; lack of skills as a reason for not volunteering; and did not apply due to family considerations.

It is important that personnel know they can volunteer to deploy to a UN peacekeeping mission. Perhaps even more essential is that personnel know when opportunities to volunteer for deployment arise. We recommend NPMEC/RCAF educate personnel on the different avenues for UN deployment, particularly regarding volunteer opportunities. We suggest NPMEC/RCAF advertise volunteer opportunities widely across the different branches of the RCAF and encourage supervisors to discuss these opportunities with women officers.

Family considerations were also mentioned as a reason why personnel do not volunteer to deploy. We recommend NPMEC/RCAF explore creative ways that allow personnel with household constraints more flexibility to deploy. This might include offering shorter mission deployment timelines, i.e., including an option for 6-month deployments in addition to the current 12-month rotation standard.

Officers also mentioned a lack of skills as a reason they did not volunteer to deploy. This corroborates findings from Issue area 2 that personnel generally lack certain skills needed for deployment. We echo our recommendation that NPMEC/RCAF consider a protocol change to allow personnel to attend trainings that focus on skills outside their assigned duties on mission.

Women (11%) were also significantly less likely than men (19%) to be selected by a superior to deploy (see Table 3.1). Officers who were not selected to deploy by a superior were asked why they believed they were not selected. Personnel (two women) cited only one reason as to why they were not selected: they lack the skills needed to deploy. Women's lack of skills appears to be a consistent obstacle to their deployment. Women cited their lack of skills as a reason they do not volunteer for deployment and they believe that this is the only reason they have not been selected by a superior to deploy. We recommend that the RCAF facilitate and encourage women officers to participate in in-service and international training opportunities to develop skills that will improve both their service to the RCAF and also their peacekeeping abilities. This might include training on driving skills; languages; computer skills; small arms/tactical skills; interpersonal and communication skills; and conflict resolution and negotiation skills.

### **Men and women have different perceptions about the testing environment, especially around issues involving fairness and societal pressure**

According to Table 3.3, only a minority of personnel (48%), believe the environment for pre-deployment tests is adequate and free of unnecessary social pressure. Women were less likely to say they had no problems with taking the test. 36% of women, versus 55% of men, said they had no concerns during the test.

Per Table 3.3, women were more likely to report concerns about irrelevant questions (7% of women, 3% of men) and distractions during the test (2% of women, 0 men). Men were more likely to state that there was social pressure due to taking the test with people of other rank. 15% of men and 7% of women reported concerns with people of other rank in the testing environment. We recommend that the RCAF pursue a better understanding of the gendered differences with issues in the testing environment, specifically related to test questions (for women) and societal pressure (for men).

**Table 3.3: What concerns did you have while taking the UN pre-deployment test(s)?  
Select all that apply.**

	Men	Women	Total
I did not have any concerns with taking the test(s)	55%	36%	48%
The test(s) was too difficult	18%	15%	17%
The test(s) are implemented with people of all rank	15%	7%	12%
The test(s) questions were not relevant	3%	7%	5%
Other people taking the test(s) /the proctor could see my responses	2%	1%	2%
My personal test(s) results were shared publicly	2%	0%	1%
The test(s) results were lost	1%	1%	1%
There were too many distractions while taking the test(s)	0%	2%	1%
There was not enough time to complete the test(s)	0%	1%	0%
Other people taking the test(s)/the proctor disrespected me while taking the tests	1%	0%	0%
The instructions for the test(s) were not clear	1%	0%	0%

### Personnel spend money on pre-deployment costs

Another major impediment is that personnel spend their own money to take the tests. 22% of personnel who have been deployed, (23% of men and 21% of women), said that they had to use their own money to purchase food during the UN pre-deployment application, selection, or training process. This makes training inaccessible for certain personnel who may not have the resources to pay these additional costs. We recommend NPMEC/RCAF explore ways to offer support to officers taking the selection exam – a potential solution would be to reimburse officers for food or other small expenses – or explore other creative ways to lower/offset the cost of taking the selection exam.

### Women and men have different views on the fairness of deployment selection

Women are significantly less likely to think that the recruitment process for UN peace operations conducted by the RCAF is fair. 83% of personnel, (90% of men and 74% of women) believe that the recruitment process conducted by the RCAF is fair. This is likely because there are discrepancies with how women are selected for deployment (see Table 3.1). For instance, 9% fewer women applied voluntarily, 8% fewer women were selected by superiors without applying to be a MO/staff and 4% fewer women were nominated as a National Support Element. We do note, however, that the FGDs did not highlight fairness as an issue.

We recommend NPMEC/RCAF increase transparency around UN peacekeeping selection processes to demonstrate to officers the fairness of the standardized process and encourage more officers to apply.



## ISSUE AREA 4: HOUSEHOLD CONSTRAINTS

High

The household constraints issue area explores the impact of having young children, elderly parents or other family obligations on women's ability to deploy to peace operations, as compared to men. It also assesses whether there is social pressure towards women who might deploy.

### Opportunities

- There is some flexibility in work conditions, such as being able to leave the office for emergencies (66% confirmed) or working from home (40%). There are not too many gendered discrepancies, however women (60%) were less likely than men (70%) to say they could leave the office in the event of an emergency.
- Pregnant women are allowed to continue working in the Armed Forces. The Cambodian Constitution also protects workers from being fired during maternity leave.
- Personnel (60%) are willing to approach their supervisors about family issues, though men (58%) are less likely than women (63%) to do so.
- Women and men (those with and without children) do not think deployment hinders their ability to be good parents.
- Women believe that their UN allowance is sufficient to support a household. 92% of the personnel, (95% of men and 87% of women), believe that payment for deployment is sufficient to maintain the household.
- The duration of deployment is aligned with women's preferences, though the timing may not be. The average ideal length of deployment is 20 months for male respondents and 30 months for female respondents.
- Personnel can leave the mission either for vacation (81% total confirmed) or in an emergency (98%), and families are compensated for emergency situations.
- The RCAF has official policies in place for maternal and sick leave.

### Barriers

- Female officers tend to face more stigma than men if they deploy. Women are significantly more likely to feel that they face social stigma if they deploy. 15% of survey respondents, (8% of men and 24% of women), said that women face social stigma if they deploy to a UN peace operation.
- Family members tend to take care of children within Cambodia as national childcare facilities are hard to find and expensive, especially for women. Only 41% of personnel reported the availability of national childcare subsidies and 35% reported the availability of national childcare facilities.
- The RCAF does not have an official leave policy for paternal, family, or elderly care. However, there may be some instances where personnel are allotted unofficial leave on a case by case basis.
- Men did not feel like they lose out on career opportunities by taking leave, but women generally felt that they miss out on opportunities in the RCAF while on leave. 50% of respondents, (46% of men and 55% of women), said they missed out on opportunities while on leave.
- According to interviews, it is not acceptable for women to breastfeed at work. Additionally, 88% of respondents, 84% of men and 93% of women, reported that women do not feel comfortable breastfeeding/pumping at work.
- Payment from the RCAF is not sufficient for managing the household. Only 55% of respondents believe that payment from the country's security institution is sufficient for managing their household. Women (45%) were significantly less likely than men (62%) to say that payment from the country's institution is sufficient for managing their household.

- Men and women deploy at different ages and life stages, and preferences do not always align with reality. While the average age of first deployment is 31 for men, women's first deployment average age is 28. This is the case because the deployed personnel need to be experienced. Additionally, on average both men and women said that a child should be at least 4 years old before their father is deployed and 5 years old before their mother is deployed.
- Women are significantly less likely to be aware of paternity and elderly care leave benefits than their male counterparts. Women (44%) were significantly less likely than men (67%) to be aware of paternity leave policy. Men (39%) were also significantly more likely to be aware of elderly care benefits than women (26%).

## Key recommendations

The RCAF should:

- Because women are significantly more likely to face stigma around deployment, the RCAF might consider implementing awareness and educational programmes to challenge misconceptions surrounding women's deployments. The Armed Forces should highlight female peacekeepers' contributions to peace operations and peacekeeping effectiveness.
- Provide paid family, sick, and elderly leave. Further, we recommend creating an official paternity leave policy with benefits.
- Ensure women have access to a private area for breastfeeding and/or pumping upon return from maternity leave.
- Increase monthly payments for officers to promote enlistment and retention in the RCAF.
- Consider providing on-site childcare facilities or subsidies for childcare, which would encourage more women and male officers with children to join.
- Via its leadership, consistently communicate a supportive and inclusive stance regarding the deployment of female officers.
- Consider highlighting the importance and visibility of female role models and trailblazers in the broader society and within the institution.

## Opportunities

### There is some flexibility in work conditions

Some flexibility exists in terms of leaving the office if there is an emergency (66% reported this, see Table 4.1). However, most respondents are not allowed to work from home (40%) or hold meetings and group activities online (43%). In addition, personnel said they are not allowed to bring their child to work (15%) or work hours that accommodate their personal/family needs (21%). According to the FFF, each organization within the RCAF can dictate the schedule and working hours of its teams. Personnel may work non-rigid hours but they are in accordance with the policy and orders of their respective superior officers.

These findings are generally consistent with Cambodia's Labour Law. In Cambodian law, no provisions could be found supporting work-life balance for parents or workers with family responsibilities. However, workers can work part-time (less than 48 hours per week). They have the same rights as full-time employees under the Labour Law, with the exception of being paid wages in proportion to the number of hours worked. Part-time employees are entitled to leave, bonuses, and other benefits in proportion to their work time.<sup>29</sup>



**Table 4.1: Which of the following activities are you able to do? Select all that apply**

	Men	Women	Total
Work from home	38%	42%	40%
Work hours that accommodate your personal/family needs	20%	22%	21%
Leave the office if there is an emergency	70%	60%	66%
Hold meetings and group activities online	45%	40%	43%
Bring my child to work	16%	14%	15%
None of the above	12%	13%	13%

### According to the FFF, pregnant women are allowed to stay in the Armed Forces

There is no provision in the law which prohibits employers from giving work to pregnant workers which could be harmful to their health. However in practice, during the first two months of resumption of work (and after giving birth), new mothers should be given only light work.<sup>30</sup>

According to the Cambodian Constitution, pregnant workers have the right to take maternity leave without losing seniority. There is no specific provision in the Labour Law regarding a worker’s right to return to the same position after availing her maternity leave. However, it is mentioned that a worker cannot be fired during the term of her maternity leave, which means that the right to return to work is implicitly guaranteed under the law.<sup>31</sup> According to a female peacekeeper at the validation workshop, “We have a law on maternity leave — we take leave but we can still have a job and the position still remains. Additionally, we have a law on maternity leave for three months. I got this request approved from my commander, ensuring there is still job security. And we can ask for a few additional months (1-2 months) based on current health conditions.”

### Men Personnel are willing to approach their supervisors about family issues

60% of personnel, (58% of men and 63% of women), said they are willing to approach their supervisors about family/household issues. While this is a majority, it does mean that many people are still reluctant to speak to their supervisors, especially men. Men may be more reluctant to speak about family issues because they perceive that it makes them appear too weak. For example, they may believe that speaking to their supervisor about leave could signal that they are not serious about their job.

<sup>29</sup> Arbitration Council (for resolving collective labour disputes) directives issued on 03/2003. Labour Law Article 171 and Prakas 267/2001 on special leave usage.

<sup>30</sup> Article 182 of the Labour Law, promulgated by Royal Order No. CS/RKM/0397/01 of 13 March 1997 (amended in 2021).

<sup>31</sup> Article 46 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, of 21 September 1993 (as amended 1999); Article 182 of the Labour Law, promulgated by Royal Order No. CS/RKM/0397/01 of 13 March 1997 (amended in 2021).

### **Women and men do not think deployment hinders their ability to be good parents**

Personnel feel that they can be good parents despite deploying. 91% of the sample, (90% of men and 92% of women), think that men can be good fathers despite deploying. 89% of the sample, (89% of men and 89% of women) think that women can be good mothers despite deploying. 90% of parents said that men can be good fathers despite deploying. 88% of parents said that women can be good mothers despite deploying.

### **Women believe that their UN allowance is sufficient to support a household**

Women are the primary caretakers of children in Cambodia. 55% of respondents, (61% of men and 36% of women), said that women are the primary caretakers of children in their household. It is not culturally acceptable for men to be the primary caretaker. Only 4% of personnel (all women) said that the father is the primary caretaker in their household. According to an interview, “If they work in Cambodia, the monthly budget will be used for them, but the RGC use the strategy to deploy them and also their monthly salary is not cut, all is given to them, so they receive both the UN and military’s pay; this is a win-win point and nothing is lost at all.”

92% of personnel, (95% of men and 87% of women), believe that payment for peacekeeping deployment is sufficient to maintain the household. According to the validation workshop participants, salary in the RCAF is based on position and rank, so women and men receive equal pay when they have equal rank. However, the participants highlighted specific challenges for single mothers or married soldiers taking care of elderly people or with more dependents. One participant noted, “Females are more pressured if compared to men because females have more responsibility toward their family. In terms of salary, if I am not married it would be enough, but when we have children, it is difficult for us because we do not have enough money; it is difficult to support the family.”

### **The duration of deployment is aligned with women’s preferences, though the timing may not be**

Women have particular gendered obligations which means their preferred timelines for deployment might look different than men’s. Among respondents, the duration of deployment of female officers, 24-27 months, is aligned with their preferences, according to the survey results. On average, respondents said that the ideal deployment length is 24 months. More specifically, the average ideal length of deployment is 20 months for male respondents and 30 months for female respondents. So, women prefer longer deployment times than men.

According to a key decision-maker interview, all deployed personnel rotate every 12 months. After the deployed contingent of MOs and SOs finish their tenure, they return home, and are replaced by a new contingent of MOs and SOs. Personnel have the option to request another year of deployment; most actually do, and are redeployed.

### **Personnel can leave the mission for vacation or in an emergency and families are compensated for emergency situations**

81% of personnel, (81% of men and 81% of women), said that personnel deployed to UN peace operations are allowed to take vacations/holidays to visit family. However, vacations during peace operations are not subsidized by the RCAF. MOs can take leaves of up to 50 days a year (depending on the mission) including compensatory time off, which may be granted to compensate their overtime and weekends. Staff officers typically have weekends off and are not eligible for compensatory time off. 80% of both female and male personnel said that the vacations are adequately subsidized by the UN.

Additionally, it is easy for personnel to return home from a mission if there is an emergency. 98% of personnel, (98% of women and 98% of men) said that there is flexibility to leave a mission if there is an emergency at home.

There is also compensation if an incident occurs to a soldier while deployed. Moreover, according to the FFF, the family of deceased (while on duty) peacekeepers receive compensation from the UN and the RGC. This was the case when a Cambodian peacekeeper died due to malaria, while four peacekeeping personnel deployed to MINUSCA died during an attack by insurgents in the southeastern part of the country.

According to the Labour Law, in the event of an occupational accident a worker is entitled to medical care services such as treatment, pharmaceutical products and transport to a treatment centre. The employer must pay the medication and health care cost of an employee who has a work-related accident.<sup>32</sup> However, according to the FFF, the families of personnel are not entitled to healthcare benefits, though they are entitled to pension benefits.

Cambodia has continued to implement social protection programmes as outlined in the National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016-2025, which includes employment injury insurance and a contributory pension scheme for certain workers in both the formal and informal sectors. Victims of work-related accidents are entitled to medical assistance (benefits in kind, medical treatment and medication as well as hospitalization) and to all surgical assistance and prostheses deemed necessary after the accident. Victims of work-related accidents can benefit from more favourable conditions if there is such an agreement between the employee and employer.<sup>33</sup>

### All personnel have options for leave

According to the Labour Law, employees may request up to seven days of special leave for personal reasons that affect their immediate family (e.g., marriage of his/her child, birth of a child, illness or death of an employee's husband, wife, children or parents). According to Article 15 of the 1997 General statutes for RCAF personnel, military personnel are entitled to paid leaves. The duration and procedures for requesting leave is included in the RCAF general codes of conduct.

Article 19 of the sub-decree on the RCAF general codes of conduct states that all active military personnel are allowed 45 days each year for annual leave. Article 21 states that personnel may request leaves to tend to family matters. However, Article 23 states that all permissions for leave will be determined by an official proclamation (Prakas) of the MoD, although in reality most are determined by individual units. Although there are no official policies on long term sick/disability leave, Article 18 of the general codes of conduct states that personnel are entitled to long-term leave to tend to family matters, although the unit commander has the right to call personnel back to work if deemed required.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the FFF indicates that unit commanders decide on sick/disability leave requests on a case by case basis.

According to Article 182 of the Labour Law, female employees are entitled to 90 days paid maternity

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<sup>32</sup> Article 254 of the Labour Law, promulgated by Royal Order No. CS/RKM/0397/01 of 13 March 1997 (amended in 2021).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Sub-decree on RCAF general codes of conduct dated 9 April 2002.

leave upon the birth of a child.<sup>35</sup> The Arbitration Council for resolving collective labour disputes has ruled that 90 days of maternity leave refers to 90 calendar days, including Sundays and holidays. There are no clear provisions in the law providing for an extension of maternity leave. Employment contracts for female workers are suspended during pregnancy, delivery, and absences due to postnatal illness. The Labour Law implicitly provides extensions for maternity leave in the event of postnatal illness.<sup>36</sup>

Female personnel in the RCAF with at least one year of service are entitled to paid maternity leave. According to RCAF interviews, it is customary to pay the mother's salary at 100% for 3 months. Pregnant workers have the right to take maternity leave without losing seniority and are protected from being fired while pregnant or on maternity leave. As such, the right to return to work is implicitly guaranteed under the law.<sup>37</sup>

## Main barriers

### Women were significantly less likely to be aware of paternity and elderly leave benefits

The RCAF has official policies for annual and maternal leave, but there are no formal leave policies for paternal, family, sick, or elderly care leave.

Despite the fact that there are no specific paternity leave entitlements in the Labour Law or RCAF policies, male personnel appear to take advantage of special leave options to qualify for benefits while taking paternity leave. 58% of personnel said they were aware of an official paternal leave policy in the RCAF (Table 4.2) and 56% said it is paid (Table 4.3). Table 4.3 shows that men (65%) were significantly more likely than women (44%) to take advantage of paid parental leave.

One interviewee also indicated that men in the RCAF can take paternity leave even if there are no specific leave entitlements found in the law on parental leave, "There is no clear guideline or policy and no specific regulation, but if the new father got the approval by the unit commander and if it is reasonable, it is OK. It is up to the leader to decide, but most of the time it will be approved."

Few personnel (33%) have taken leave for elderly care purposes (Table 4.2). Like paternal leave, women (26%) were significantly less likely than men (39%) to know about opportunities for elderly care leave.

It is good practice that the RCAF has policies for maternal and special leave opportunities. Ideally however, personnel should not have to use annual leave for paternal, family, or elderly care. We recommend that NPMEC/RCAF formalize leave policies for paternal, family, and elderly care.

### Women generally feel that they miss out on career opportunities in the RCAF while on leave

Women may be more likely to take leave than men. This means that they may miss out on opportunities. The survey data support this idea. 50% of personnel, (46% of men and 55% of women) said that they missed out on career opportunities while on leave. Women are significantly more likely to believe that they miss out on opportunities when they take leave.

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<sup>35</sup> Article 182 of the Labour Law, promulgated by Royal Order No. CS/RKM/0397/01 of 13 March 1997 (amended in 2021).

<sup>36</sup> Article 182 of the Labour Law, promulgated by Royal Order No. CS/RKM/0397/01 of 13 March 1997 (amended in 2021); Arbitration Council Awards (25/2008, 23/2008, 08/2007).

<sup>37</sup> Article 46 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, of 21 September 1993 (as amended 1999).

One possible reason for this is that men may take opportunities to receive training while on leave whereas women do not. According to the FFF, personnel have the opportunity to engage in in-service training while on leave. In practice, more than half of both male and female respondents say that they were never offered such an option. 51% of survey respondents, (50% of men and 53% of women), said that this option was never offered to them.

The validation workshop confirmed that women are concerned that when they take a long leave they will lose the opportunity to deploy on a mission because the commander may select someone else. During maternity leave or after childbirth they do not have the opportunities for deployment because, among various reasons, they are not in a healthy state both physically and mentally to serve in a peacekeeping mission. Promotions, however, are not affected by maternity leave.

**Men are significantly less likely to know about maternity leave policies**

65% of survey respondents said they were aware of the security institution’s official maternal leave policy (see Table 4.2) and 78% were aware that maternity leave is paid (see Table 4.3 below). Men (50%) were significantly less likely than women (85%) to be aware of official maternity leave policies. Men were also significantly less likely to know that maternity leave is paid (70% of men were aware of this compared to 88% of women).

**Table 4.2: For which of these can you take an official leave in the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces?**

	Men	Women	Total
Maternal	50%	85%	65%
Paternal	67%	44%	58%
Sick	83%	80%	82%
Family care	57%	51%	54%
Elderly care	39%	26%	33%
Annual leave	26%	24%	25%
Disability	59%	55%	57%
None	8%	3%	5%

**Table 4.3: For which of these is there PAID leave in the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces?**

	Men	Women	Total
Maternal	70%	88%	78%
Paternal	65%	44%	56%
Sick	83%	76%	80%
Family care	52%	37%	45%
Elderly care	29%	27%	28%
Annual leave	40%	22%	32%
Disability	60%	56%	58%
None	4%	5%	5%

### It is not acceptable for women to breastfeed at work

According to Cambodian law, female workers are entitled to two paid nursing breaks, each of 30-minute duration, for new mothers to breastfeed their child(ren) until a child is 12 months old. The breastfeeding/nursing breaks are additional to the normal breaks an employee receives during the working day. Exact timing of breastfeeding/nursing breaks is agreed on between the mother and the employer.<sup>38</sup> Labour Law also requires the employer to establish a child care facility in an enterprise if the total number of female workers is more than 100. The conditions of establishment of a day care facility are determined by a decision of the relevant Minister. If an establishment is not able to provide child care facilities, female workers may place their child(ren) in any day care and the employer has to pay the dues.<sup>39</sup>

Despite these laws, 88% of the sample, (84% of men and 93% of women), said that women do not feel comfortable breastfeeding/pumping at work. This may be because currently there are no support facilities and/or private spaces for breastfeeding/pumping at work because the design of the workspace did not take gendered needs into account. Indeed, 80% of the sample, (77% of men and 84% of women), said that the RCAF does not provide adequate breastfeeding/pumping arrangements for women at work. The FGDs confirmed that it is not acceptable for women to breastfeed/pump at work. Focus group participants indicated that there are no facilities for women to pump or breastfeed and that women do not feel comfortable doing so. One participant even went so far as to say she feels that the environment does not allow for pregnancy nor breastfeeding, and suggested that there should be separate facilities for nursing women, “Breastfeed[ing] is not well perceived. It’s thought of as something you keep for yourself in a secret place. But things are changing slowly. Women just want to be comfortable now but they still have this culture that imposes them. But what we can say is that still, we feel safe in our working environment and I think

<sup>38</sup> Article 184 & 185 of the Labour Law, promulgated by Royal Order No. CS/RKM/0397/01 of 13 March 1997 (amended in 2021).

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

in a few years, some women can feel confident to do it.” According to an interview with a man, “There is nothing standing and written but in practice women prefer to [breastfeed] at home [rather] than at work. They just fill [out] a request form to be able to have a break to go home to do it and it is up to the unit in charge of personnel issues to approve it. It is about the customs and norms of the people.”

We recommend that the RCAF ensures that women have access to a private area for breastfeeding and/or pumping upon return from maternity leave.

### **Payment from the RCAF is not sufficient for managing the household**

Only 55% of personnel in the sample believe that the payment from the country’s institution is sufficient for managing their household. Focus group participants stated that they cannot afford day to day expenses or emergency expenses. Furthermore, women were significantly less likely to say that the payment is sufficient for managing their household (45% of women as compared to 62% of men). Yet as mentioned above, women were more likely to say that UN pay is sufficient to manage the household. This means that women see the supplemental earning from UN deployment as making up for the lack of payment from the RCAF. Peacekeeping is thus an important way to ensure pay equity. If fewer women are deployed, then women are at a socioeconomic disadvantage within the RCAF. We recommend increasing monthly payments for officers to promote enlistment and retention in the RCAF.

### **Family members tend to take care of children within Cambodia as national childcare facilities cannot be found, especially for women**

According to the FFF, it is the norm for extended families to provide childcare in the country, as there are almost no childcare subsidies. The RCAF does not currently provide childcare facilities. 94% of survey respondents, (96% of men and 91% of women) said that they have family/extended family (including children, elders, etc.) who can take care of their household while they deploy on a UN peace operation.

Given the culture of family care, only 41% of respondents (40% of men and 42% of women) said that there are childcare subsidies in the country (see Table 4.4). Furthermore, only 14% of personnel (16% of men and 12% of women) said that the Armed Forces provides childcare subsidies to the personnel.

When asked about the types of childcare available in Cambodia (Table 4.4), 18% of respondents reported that there are none (no childcare options available). In contrast, 54% reported the availability of private childcare (e.g. private day cares, nannies, etc.) as an option for family/child care in Cambodia.

While the FFF suggests that there are no national childcare subsidies, 41% of personnel report the availability of national childcare subsidies and 35% report the availability of national childcare facilities. Some personnel (14%) also report the availability of childcare subsidies provided by the RCAF. A small number of respondents (5%) report the availability of childcare facilities provided by the RCAF. Compared to their female counterparts, men are significantly more likely to report the existence of family/child care that is not actually available in Cambodia.

We recommend the RCAF provide on-site childcare facilities or distribute subsidies for childcare. This will encourage more women and male officers with children to join.

**Table 4.4: What types of family/child care are available in Cambodia? Select all that apply.**

	Men	Women	Total
National childcare subsidies	40%	42%	41%
National childcare facilities	40%	31%	36%
Childcare subsidies provided by the RCAF	16%	12%	14%
Childcare facilities provided by the RCAF	6%	4%	5%
Private childcare (e.g. private day cares, nannies, etc.)	54%	55%	54%
None	18%	19%	18%

### Men and women deploy at different ages and life stages

Given that men and women have different roles within their households and different preferences over timelines, it is important to understand ideal deployment time periods. Women tend to deploy when they do not have children. While the average number of children for male peacekeepers is one child, it is zero for female peacekeepers. There is a discrepancy between the average age of women's and men's first deployment. While the average age of first deployment is 31 for men, women's first deployment average age is 28. This is especially important since both men and women in the sample said that the average ideal age for deployment is 23. According to the validation workshop, it is because, "women don't have interest to join when [they] get old, but men are still willing to join even after 55 years old."

The preferred average age of children when personnel deploy is not the same for men and women. On average, both men and women said that a child should be at least four years old before their father is deployed. However, both men and women said that a child should be at least five years old before their mother is deployed.

The data suggest that there are differences in preferences for deployment between men and women. If deployment timelines are based on men's preferences, this has the potential to disadvantage women because the timing is not right for them. Although there is an age requirement for deployment, the RCAF should consider deployment opportunities for personnel across all ages and family situations to increase the existing pool of deployment-eligible officers.

### Female officers tend to face more stigma than men if they deploy

Women, especially those with children, are significantly more likely to feel that they face social stigma if they deploy to a UN peace operation. 15% of survey respondents, (8% of men and 24% of women), said that women face social stigma in deploying to a UN peace operation. A female peacekeeper described this during the validation workshop, "Personally, when I was deployed in 2020 my child was one year and four months, and my family encouraged me to deploy. But there was a stigma with regard to the neighbourhood, that the child was young. Sometimes, as long as they have a caregiver at home, they can be deployed regardless of age. But the concern is having a



caregiver for younger children. The woman's family is worried that they might not have a caregiver. When the child goes to school, it is a little easier."

Much of this stigma comes from family. Participating in peacekeeping is socially unacceptable among peacekeepers' families, especially for female personnel. 66% of survey respondents, (64% of men and 69% of women) said that they are afraid of their family's judgement if they participate in a UN peace operation. Furthermore, women feel that they must receive permission from family members to deploy. 73% of survey respondents, (78% of men and 65% of women), believe that women do need to get permission from husbands/fathers to deploy on a mission. Generally, women and men in the RCAF said that they believe women need to ask for permission from their fathers or husbands to deploy. Focus group participants stated that women have to ask for permission from their husband to deploy, and that social perceptions of deployed women still need improvement. They also stated that husbands tend to think their wives should be close to home and take care of children. This is a clear link to social and gender norms that limit women's empowerment and the choices that they can make independently, as they are expected to get permission from men.

Women are significantly more likely to face stigma around deployment. The RCAF might consider implementing awareness and educational programmes to challenge misconceptions surrounding women's deployment. The RCAF should highlight female peacekeepers' contributions to peace operations and peacekeeping effectiveness. Additionally, leadership should consistently communicate a supportive and inclusive stance regarding the deployment of female officers. The RCAF may also consider highlighting the importance and visibility of female role models and trailblazers in the broader society and within the institution.



## ISSUE AREA 5: PEACE OPERATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

High

The peace operations infrastructure issue area assesses whether the lack of adequate equipment and infrastructure prevents women from deploying to peace operations.

### Opportunities

- 100% of deployed personnel have attended pre-deployment training. 94% of deployed personnel (93% of men and 96% of women) said their training was held at the peacekeeping training centre.
- Deployed personnel have access to sleeping quarters. 94% of deployed personnel, including 91% of men and 98% of women, said they had access to their preferred sleeping arrangement (same-sex sleeping facilities) while on mission.
- Peacekeepers have access to healthcare while on mission. 94% of deployed personnel, (96% of men and 91% of women), said they had access to healthcare while on mission.

### Main barriers

- Among all personnel who have deployed to a UN peacekeeping mission, only 64% of respondents, (72% of men and 79% of women), indicated that they have taken pre-deployment training at the peacekeeping training centre in Cambodia. Focus group participants pointed to women's health issues as preventing them from attending training, such as periods. Validation workshop participants emphasized that women also lacked access to nurses and female doctors at the training facility. To avoid period stigma, the RCAF might consider providing personal days that can be taken by men and women, as men also have specific health challenges.

- Women were more likely to perceive mission facilities/equipment as inadequate. Women were more likely than men to say that bathrooms, sleeping quarters, office space, and uniforms were inadequate.
- Women perceive health facilities as more inadequate than men while on mission. Women lacked access to adequate reproductive healthcare, birth control, mental health resources, and female physicians.
- Uniforms do not accommodate female peacekeepers. 20% of deployed personnel, (39% of men and 61% of women), said that their uniforms did not fit. A vast majority (88%) of deployed personnel, (87% of men and 90% of women), said that uniforms did not accommodate their cultural or religious needs.
- Vehicles are not fitted for shorter people, making it nearly impossible for many women to take on driving roles.

## Recommendations

- Implement a policy for personal days off that can be used by all personnel for specific health challenges, including menstrual-related needs, to mitigate stigma and ensure equality.
- Provide an emergency kit for all personnel, containing essential first aid materials, personal hygiene supplies for both men and women, and birth control, to cater to basic health and hygiene needs during travel and deployment.
- Strengthen mental health support services for personnel, ensuring access to adequate resources and professional help during deployment.
- Design and distribute uniforms that are suitable for the diverse body shapes and sizes of all personnel, ensuring comfort and functionality.
- Incorporate options that respect and accommodate various cultural and religious requirements. This could include offering different styles of uniforms, such as varying sleeve lengths, pants instead of skirts, or inclusion of headgear options that align with religious practices.
- Ensure an equal and sufficient distribution of uniforms, recognizing that women may require more sets due to health-related needs, such as menstruation.
- Prioritize the availability of essential medication and equipment before deployment specific to men and women's health needs.
- Provide access to female primary health providers and specialists, including gynaecologists, to address the unique health issues of women in a comfortable and understanding environment.
- Conduct a full needs assessment for supplies and facilities prior to deployment, taking into consideration the specific requirements of women. This should be done during the MoU phase.
- Ensure the availability of separate and adequate bathroom facilities and sleeping quarters for different genders, to respect privacy and comfort.
- In new missions, collaborate with the UN or other institutions to support a comprehensive needs assessment that includes considerations for women's needs.
- Address the issue of limited supplies in initial deployments by planning and requesting necessary resources well in advance.
- Implement a fair and non-discriminatory policy regarding sick leave for menstrual-related issues, ensuring that requests for leave are treated with respect and without bias.
- To enhance vehicle access for shorter drivers, especially women, vehicles should be equipped with advanced, customizable interior features. This includes seats with extensive vertical and horizontal adjustability, tilt, and lumbar support, along with adjustable pedal systems and telescoping steering wheels offering tilt and height adjustments.

## Opportunities

### Pre-deployment and gender-related peacekeeping training is available in Cambodia

The RCAF offers pre-deployment training courses to all service personnel. All contingents will undergo 6-12 months training, which consists of three programmes: The National Training Program, the Core Pre-deployment Training Materials (CPTM), a UN designed training programme, and the Specialized Training Materials course.

The National Training Program is mandatory and designed in collaboration with national stakeholders. For example, NPMEC can invite instructors and policymakers from each of the ministries to deliver key lessons in their respective issue areas. For example, the MoWA provided training on gender abuse and national law concerning women. Usually, the courses are offered and coordinated by the respective ministries/units. Presently, NPMEC has two training institutions<sup>40</sup> where gender-related training is sometimes organized. In 2022, NPMEC hosted a training course on anti-human trafficking and sex trafficking, presented by Major General Keo Sovannara, Deputy Secretary-General of the National Committee for Counter Trafficking of the Ministry of Interior (MoI). Eighty trainees participated in the course in preparation for their deployment to Mali and the CAR in 2022.

The CPTM is designed by the UN Integrated Training Service. It consists of three modules that provide lessons on WPS, gender mainstreaming, and other topics. The CPTM is intended to provide a shared understanding of the basic principles, guidelines and policies required by all peacekeeping personnel – military, police and civilians – to function effectively in UN peacekeeping operations. These standards guide peacekeeping personnel as they carry out critical tasks to assist countries in the transition from conflict to peace.<sup>41</sup> NPMEC translated all these training materials and appointed experienced lecturers to deliver the lessons.

The Specialized Training Materials differs from one contingent to another depending on their specialization. For example, a MP contingent will train on investigation techniques, forensics, rules and regulations of the RCAF and host nation, etc., whereas an EOD contingent trains on detection and disposal techniques and procedures, safe transport and storage of explosives, etc.

Sometimes, personnel take peacekeeping training and are not deployed. By way of explanation, all formed contingents which undergo pre-deployment training are standing by for troop rotation with those in the mission. Contingent members may be replaced if members voluntarily and formally request their replacement or withdraw from the contingent. If contingent members commit any of the following violations, they may be subject to temporary suspension or removal from the contingent and be replaced:

1. Convicted of a crime (civil or military);
2. Engaged in drug abuse;
3. Suffered from serious illness or injury that resulted in inability to perform the designated role/responsibilities;
4. Became disabled.

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<sup>40</sup> The Institute for Peacekeeping force, Mine and Explosive Remnant of War clearance (IPMEC) is located in Krang Ponleur village, Veang Jas commune, Udong district, Kampong Speu province (41 Km from Phnom Penh). The Training School for Multinational Peacekeeping Forces is located in Moha Sang commune, Phnom Sroch district, Kampong Speu province (63 Km from Phnom Penh).

<sup>41</sup> Details are available here: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/pre-deployment/cptm/intro>. NPMEC translated all these training materials and appointed experienced lecturers to deliver the lessons.

Trained personnel may miss deployment opportunities when there are drastic changes in a UN mission that affect personnel deployment. For instance, when there's a reduction in contingent size communicated by the UN HQ in NYC, Cambodia has no choice but to abide by those decisions. Recently, the entire MINUSMA was ordered to withdraw and close. This resulted in two Cambodian contingents that were undergoing pre-deployment training to miss their deployment chances until a future arrangement is made by NPMEC.

In addition, NPMEC maintains one contingent for the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System (PCRS). Members of this contingent will undergo the same training as an outgoing contingent for the annual rotation but this contingent will not deploy until there is a new request from the UN. Basically, this contingent is standing by without a clear timeline for deployment.<sup>42</sup>

Among surveyed personnel, 100% of deployed personnel attended pre deployment training. 94% of deployed personnel (93% of men and 96% of women) said their training was held at the peacekeeping training centre in Cambodia.

### **Personnel have access to sleeping quarters**

94% of deployed personnel, (91% of men and 98% of women), said they had access to their preferred sleeping arrangement (same-sex sleeping facilities) while on mission. In addition, 95% of them (98% of men and 92% of women) considered that sleeping quarters were adequate in the most recent UN peace operation to which they were deployed.

### **Peacekeepers have access to healthcare while on mission**

94% of the deployed sample, (96% of men and 91% of women), said that they had healthcare while on mission. In addition, 98% (98% of men and 99% of women) considered that health facilities were adequate in the most recent UN peace operation to which they were deployed. And 97% of them (99% of men and 96% of women) considered that general healthcare was adequate while in any of the UN peace operation to which they have been deployed.

### **Main barriers**

#### **Women are less likely to entirely complete pre-deployment training at the peacekeeping training centre in Cambodia**

According to the FFF, there are national peacekeeping training centres in Cambodia, namely Udong training institute (IPMEC) and the training school for multinational peacekeeping forces (Peacekeeping Operations School). 64% of respondents said that they have taken pre-deployment training at the peacekeeping training centre within Cambodia, however women are significantly less likely to attend the training school. While 73% of men have participated in training there, only 52% of women have reported participating in such training at that location. However, this difference is lower within the deployed sample. Of all the personnel that have deployed to a UN peacekeeping mission, 80% of men and 79% of women indicated that they took pre-deployment training at the peacekeeping training centre.

The FGDs highlight several reasons for this gap. Some participants highlight health concerns, such as periods, as presenting challenges, but most say it is because of stigma. This was confirmed during

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<sup>42</sup> See here for references on PCRS: <https://pcrs.un.org/Lists/FAQ/DispForm.aspx?ID=96>.

the validation workshop when a female peacekeeper elaborated on the difficulties that menstruation might pose to attendance at training, “Sometimes you can pass out or experience much pain during a period so it might be difficult to attend training every month. Men might say that she got her period and went missing.” Female peacekeepers in the validation workshop also indicated that in cases where a couple is enlisted in the RCAF and required to attend training, “...if they have small children, women may ask permission to take care of their children while the husband attends, so only the husband can attend the training. Women cannot fully engage due to these concerns.”

### Women were more likely to perceive facilities/equipment as inadequate

According to the FFF, every soldier who was deployed received a soldier kit provided by the MoD through NPMEC. Equipment in the kit includes a first aid kit, handkerchief, socks, military battle uniforms, meal tray and cutlery, canteen, belt, backpack, webbing, hammock, and other basic necessities such as a blanket.

As for facilities, women (22%) were more likely than men (4%) to state that bathrooms, sleeping quarters, office space, and uniforms were inadequate. Women were also more likely to indicate that sleeping quarters were inadequate (8%) than their male counterparts (3%). Uniforms were also an area of disparate experience, in which no men reported experiencing inadequacies with their uniforms, but women (4%) did report some level of concern with their uniforms. This was confirmed in the validation workshop, where female peacekeepers confirmed the difficulties in uniform fit for women.

Overall however, the majority of survey respondents (73% of men and 65% of women) reported no inadequacies in the facilities during their UN peace operation. Additionally, 35% of women stated that there were no inadequacies whereas 27% of men stated the same. Put another way, 30% of the sample, (23% of men and 35% of women), reported that at least one facility/equipment in the most recent UN peace operation to which they were deployed was inadequate. Other facilities that they found inadequate included the internet. While the majority have not experienced facility/equipment inadequacies while on-mission, women were significantly more likely to experience infrastructural inadequacies compared to their male counterparts.

**Table 5.1: What, if any, types of facilities/equipment were inadequate in the MOST RECENT UN peace operation to which you were deployed?**

	Men	Women	Total
Bathrooms	4%	22%	11%
Sleeping quarters	3%	8%	5%
Office space	1%	5%	3%
Dining	2%	3%	2%
Recreational space	20%	13%	17%
Uniforms	0%	4%	2%
Health facility	2%	1%	2%
Equipment	2%	3%	2%
No facilities/equipment were inadequate (all were adequate)	73%	65%	70%

The concerns surrounding inadequate bathroom facilities for female peacekeepers were highlighted through surveys, FGDs, and a validation workshop. Women in the focus groups vividly described the challenges they faced: one woman recounted an incident during deployment when, due to the absence of bathrooms, she was forced to retreat to the forest for menstruation-related needs, relying on male colleagues to stand guard, which she found deeply embarrassing. Additionally, focus group respondents noted that bathrooms are often located far from accommodations and, with electricity typically cut off around 8-9 pm, the journey to these facilities becomes unsafe in the darkness, posing a significant safety concern for women at night. Issues of privacy and hygiene were also raised, with participants reporting that some bathrooms lack roofs or functional doors and that water supply is often unclear or insufficient.

This situation also extends to exercise facilities, with women expressing discomfort at having to exercise in male-dominated spaces. These infrastructural inadequacies are recognized by senior leaders as barriers to women’s participation. One leader pointedly stated, “Sometimes they need to spend 15 days en route to the mission location, so it’s an obstacle for women to be deployed with the men in terms of the use of bathrooms and the accommodation as well; hence, in some cases, it’s the actual situation of the mission that makes it hard for women to fully participate and function.”

Validation workshop participants, including both male and female personnel, affirmed these findings. They stressed that such conditions are particularly challenging in new mission areas where infrastructure is under development by the UN. A consensus emerged that addressing these infrastructure challenges during the contracting and MoU process could mitigate these issues, ensuring appropriate facilities for women before the deployment of any mission.

Women perceive health facilities as more inadequate than men

While the majority of respondents (55%) reported that no services were inadequate, men (66%) were significantly more likely to report having no issues with healthcare facilities compared to their women counterparts (39%). The disproportionate experience of women is particularly relevant with regard to primary healthcare concerns for women, including reproductive healthcare, sanitary products, and birth control. Survey results suggest that women were not frequently given sanitary products and reproductive healthcare when they deployed. Survey results indicate that 14% (17% of women and 11% of men) of the sample considered that reproductive healthcare services were inadequate while on mission. 30% of the sample indicated that sanitary products were inadequate on mission; this was especially an area of concern for women (52%) compared to their male counterparts (16%). The disproportionate level of inadequacy reported by female respondents is likely due to the higher demand for sanitary products from female personnel. Women in the focus groups stated that the lack of sanitary pads was a major issue for them.

**Table 5.2: Which of the following services, if any, were inadequate while in ANY of the UN peace operations to which you have been deployed? Select all that apply.**

	Men	Women	Total
General healthcare	1%	6%	3%
Mental healthcare	7%	16%	11%
Sanitary products	16%	52%	30%
Reproductive healthcare	11%	17%	14%
Birth control	10%	20%	14%
No services were inadequate	66%	39%	55%

Birth control is not widely accessible on missions. 67% of the deployed personnel, (72% of men and 60% of women) said that they did not have access to birth control. According to the table above, 14% (20% of women and 10% of men) of the sample considered that birth control services were inadequate while on mission.

Additionally, access to adequate mental health was more of a problem for women than men. 29% of the deployed personnel, (27% of men and 31% of women) said that they did not have access to mental healthcare while on a mission. Only 52% of women stated that they had access to sanitary pads. Mental health challenges may look different for women. According to one interview, “because of the UN working environment — it is a kind of conflict working environment — the existing infrastructure is still limited. Peacekeepers, both women and men, will be deployed to very remote areas; there is no infrastructure, there is no proper shelter, proper accommodation in the area where they’re going to be deployed. So it’s difficult for female peacekeepers to cope with the situation where they are deployed. So [there is] that need to make sure the mission will provide the appropriate shelter and accommodation and special care for them.

Women do not have access to female physicians. 31% of female deployed personnel said that they never received care from a female physician. Limited access to female physicians was a particularly notable theme in both the FGDs and the validation workshops. Female personnel in both the focus group and validation workshop discussions indicated that they prefer to speak to female doctors about both general medical issues as well as reproductive health issues. With regard to women’s health issues in particular, personnel have expressed the necessity for better access to female healthcare professionals on mission. Cultural constraints make it difficult for deployed women to consult with male doctors on women’s health issues.

It is also worth noting that focus group participants stated that the malaria medicine they brought from Cambodia did not work in the countries where they were deployed. They had to rely on local medicine, using their own resources to pay for the medicine. Additionally, women in focus groups stated that while they could get basic care, specialty care (e.g. for tooth removal) is not possible.

Women in the RCAF have also created informal mechanisms of support among themselves. Women in the focus groups indicated that there is a group chat in which the women talk about mental care, gender and the problems that they face. This group chat is supported by the Gender Focal Point (GFP), which also trains personnel on women’s issues in the RCAF.

In response to these facilities issues, we recommend that RCAF collaborates with the UN to conduct a thorough needs assessment for supplies and facilities prior to deployment, emphasizing the specific requirements of women. The results of the needs assessment should be integrated into the MoU phase as suggested by the validation workshop; this will allow for the RCAF to appropriately anticipate the costs and resources needed for a given mission.

These needs assessments should ensure the provision of separate and adequate bathroom facilities and sleeping quarters for both men and women. General healthcare facilities as well as mental healthcare should also be made available on mission. For women, the needs assessment should assess the availability and access to women’s sanitary products, reproductive healthcare, and female health care professionals. Responses from the validation workshop emphasized that in both new and existing mission deployments, equipment requests take an extensive time to be filled. Accordingly, the issue of limited supplies in initial deployments should be mitigated by proactive planning and resource requests both during and prior to the mission.

Finally, deployed personnel should be provided an emergency kit that includes essential first aid materials, personal hygiene supplies for both men and women, and birth control. This will allow for personnel to have access to basic resources to meet immediate health and hygiene needs.

These steps are essential not only for mitigating barriers to women's meaningful participation but should also become standard protocol for all peacekeeping mission deployments.

### **Uniforms do not accommodate female peacekeepers**

20% of deployed personnel, (39% of men and 61% of women) said that their uniforms did not fit their body. Personnel, including both men and women, sometimes have to get their uniforms tailored to fit. The boots also do not match the sizes for Cambodian women.

Female peacekeepers in the validation workshop elaborated on these findings, asserting that, "The smallest size available did not fit my body; the uniform was too big. There are women who are even smaller than me!" Discussions during the validation workshop also highlighted the need to adjust the boot sizes for women. Female peacekeepers reported that, as of now, 38 is the smallest size, which is quite big for their feet. Participants came to a consensus that uniform fit is an important barrier to women's participation. One female peacekeeper said, "If we want to encourage women, it is important that we consider the sizes of uniforms; the smallest size for men cannot be the smallest for women. We have not been taken into consideration."

In addition, 88% of total respondents, (90% of women and 86% of men) said that uniforms provided by the country never accommodate religious/traditional clothing, and 12% of women find the uniform provided by the RCAF inadequate (compared to 2% of men).

To address the diverse needs of female personnel in the RCAF, it is recommended to design and distribute uniforms that cater to a variety of body shapes and sizes, prioritizing both comfort and functionality. This initiative should include accommodating different cultural and religious practices by offering varied uniform styles, such as adjustable sleeve lengths, the choice between pants and skirts, and headgear options in line with religious observances. Additionally, an equitable and sufficient distribution of uniforms must be ensured, with particular attention to the specific needs of women, such as providing additional sets to accommodate health-related needs like menstruation. This approach will ensure that all personnel feel respected, comfortable, and adequately equipped in their uniforms, fostering a more inclusive and effective working environment.

### **Vehicles are not fitted for shorter people**

According to the FFF, UN vehicles and other equipment are not outfitted for shorter people. Except for the armoured personnel carrier, all vehicles that Cambodia deploys are full-size vehicles. For reference, the RCAF's selection requirement for height is 160cm and up for men and 150cm and up for women. In other words, there are no men or women in the RCAF shorter than 150cm. However, this still places women at a disadvantage for driving roles.

To address the challenge faced by shorter personnel, particularly women, in operating UN vehicles, we recommend modifying the existing vehicle fleet to include adjustable features, such as seats with vertical and horizontal movement, adjustable steering wheels, and pedal extenders. Additionally, implementing a vehicle acquisition policy that prioritizes ergonomic design to accommodate drivers of all statures, including those meeting the RCAF's minimum height requirements (150cm for women, 160cm for men), will ensure that future procurements are inclusive and functional for all personnel. This approach will enable a more diverse range of individuals to effectively fulfil driving roles within the UN missions.





## ISSUE AREA 6: PEACE OPERATIONS EXPERIENCES

Medium

The peace operations experiences issue area assesses the impact of (positive and negative) experiences during deployment, including experiences of meaningful participation, on women's decision to redeploy or not, and to encourage or discourage others from deploying.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

#### Opportunities

- Most respondents (98%) felt a sense of personal fulfilment while deployed, and most of them believed they helped to contribute to the peace and security of the host country.
- 94% of personnel felt their deployment skills matched their mission role, but women (84%) were significantly less likely than men (99%) to report they felt this way.
- When transitioning back to life at home, most respondents received assistance from the UN (91%), a formal programme in the Armed Forces (72%), and the Government (72%). Women (52%) were significantly more likely than men (32%) to receive transition support from their supervisor after the mission.
- Most personnel (62%) engage in informal networking opportunities while on mission. Women (37%) are more likely than men (7%) to have been integrated into a group for personnel specific to their gender.
- There is an opportunity to receive gender training while on mission. 93% of all respondents, (93% of men and 93% of women), reported attending at least one gender training during their deployment.

#### Main Barriers

- Personnel (36% total, including 39% of men and 33% of women) have financial difficulties while on mission.
- More women than men experienced problems with their personal relationships (11% of women and 6% for men), spouses (8% women and 5% men), family members (7% women and 3% men), and children (4% women and 3% men) after returning from mission.
- Respondents experienced problems on mission, particularly related to homesickness (54%), health (39%), and security (28%). Women were significantly more likely than men to report health problems (45% of women as compared to 34% of men) as well as problems with lodging/hygiene (9% of women versus 1% of men).
- Some personnel experienced harassment and discrimination while deployed. 27% of personnel who have deployed said they experienced some form of discrimination while on mission. Women (22%) were significantly more likely than men (10%) to experience unnecessary criticism while on mission. 8% of deployed personnel have been called a name by colleagues while on mission.
- Many deployed personnel have heard stories or complaints about negative experiences on mission. 76% of personnel report having heard of women having a negative experience and 74% report having heard of men having a negative experience while on mission.
- The majority of deployed personnel do not engage with locals (40% total, including 45% of men and 32% of women). Women were significantly more likely to engage with locals every day (21% of women compared to 9% of men) and engage every day with local women (23% of women versus 5% of men) than their male counterparts.
- Deployed personnel are underprepared for dealing with situations of rape. Slightly under half (47%) of deployed personnel, including 42% women and 56% men, feel prepared to handle a situation of spousal rape.

## Recommendations

- Establish financial support programmes to alleviate financial difficulties during missions.
- Provide financial literacy classes so that personnel understand how to manage their salary from peacekeeping missions.
- Increase allowances for purchasing personal items, reflecting the practical needs of personnel on mission.
- Implement a policy of double payment (RCAF + UN payment) for personnel on missions, along with a range of benefits including leave and pay upon repatriation.
- Encourage personnel to share experiences from deployment upon repatriation to enrich the organization's knowledge base and individual personal development.
- Establish a peer mentorship programme for newly deployed women to receive support from experienced peacekeepers.
- Leverage mission experience for personal and career development, including applications for retirement benefits.
- Develop relationship support initiatives, offering counselling services and family support programmes, especially for women facing challenges during and after missions.
- Create gender-sensitive retention policies to help balance work with family and caregiving responsibilities.
- Provide mechanisms for regular communication with families during deployment, such as scheduled calls, to maintain family connections and support.
- Enhance mental health resources to address homesickness, health issues, and security concerns during missions.
- Provide training on stress management, resilience, and coping strategies, including engagement in activities like sports, gardening, socializing, or cooking.
- Encourage personnel to foster better relationships with local communities in mission areas. We recommend structured interaction programmes, incentives for regular engagement, cultural and language training, gender-specific strategies, and monitoring of interactions.
- Ensure comprehensive training in handling situations of sexual violence and harassment, including pre-deployment, in-service, and during deployment trainings.
- Implement comprehensive anti-harassment and discrimination policies with clear reporting mechanisms.
- Equip all personnel with the knowledge and skills to respond to and prevent discrimination, harassment, and sexual violence.

## Opportunities

### **Most respondents felt a sense of personal fulfilment while deployed, and most of them believed they helped to contribute to the peace and security of the host country**

The vast majority of deployed personnel (98%) felt a sense of personal fulfilment. 62% (59% of men and 69% of women) agreed and 35%, (41% of men and 28% of women) strongly agreed with the statement, "I helped improve peace and security in the host country of ANY of the UN peace operations to which I have been deployed."

Interviews also emphasized a sense of pride in their work on mission, "It is remarkable to see the flag of Cambodia, which is a small country, suffered by war in the past, now is flying high equally with other countries in the mission regions." Moreover, only 13% of deployed personnel, including 13% of men and 13% of women, reported problems adjusting to local culture on mission.

### **Men and women feel prepared for the mission and that their skills match their role in mission**

Personnel felt strongly that they were prepared for their deployment. 100% of deployed respondents felt prepared for their mission. In particular, 59% felt very prepared, 37% felt prepared, and 4% felt prepared to some extent. There is no statistically significant difference between the level of preparedness expressed between deployed men and women. This high level of preparation is likely due to the pre-deployment training that all personnel receive. Moreover, 94% of deployed personnel, (99% of deployed men and 84% of deployed women) felt that their skills matched their role in the mission. However, this difference between deployed men and women is statistically significant, meaning women are less likely to feel that their skills match their deployment role compared to their male counterparts.

### **Almost all personnel engage in social activities while deployed**

94% of deployed personnel, (93% of men and 96% of women), engaged in social activities at least once during deployment. Women were significantly more likely to engage in social activity more frequently than their male counterparts.

According to an interview, “Women not only take part in core tasks, domestic and overseas missions but also civil-military relations, which involve social works such as assistance to postpartum mothers, rice farmers, vaccination campaigns against COVID-19 for military families and local civilians, and humanitarian work to assist those who suffered from natural disasters, such as drought, and human-made disasters, such as fires. Some military women work in the medical corps as nurses and doctors in addition to being military personnel.”

### **Most personnel did not experience challenges while deployed with respect to local culture, other peacekeepers, payments, and food/lodging/hygiene**

Most personnel who have deployed did not report problems during their deployment. 92% of deployed personnel disagree with the statement: “Peacekeepers from other countries create problems for peacekeepers from my own country”. 96% of deployed personnel disagree with the statement “Peacekeepers from other countries prevent the peacekeeping mission from being successful”. According to an interview, “Their participation allows them to create friendships with others from both small and big countries wishing and loving peace; and they also gain more skills and knowledge from participating in the peace operation mission.” All but one respondent (99.5%) reported no issues with payments during the mission. In addition, only 9% (8% of men and 10% of women) reported issues with food. Only 4% of deployed personnel (0.6% of men and 9% of women) reported issues with lodging/hygiene. However, there is a statistically significant difference in the negative experiences of women with lodging and hygiene compared to male counterparts. Both interviews and participants in the validation workshop emphasized that the peacekeeping mission is a conflict environment. Accordingly, there is a consensus that existing infrastructure and accommodations are often limited, especially in very remote areas.

According to an interview, it is important, “To make sure the mission will provide the appropriate shelter and accommodation and special care for them. Because in the UN working environment, it is kind of a conflict working environment, the existing infrastructure is still limited. Peacekeepers, both women and men, will be deployed to very remote areas; there is no infrastructure, there is no proper shelter, proper accommodation.”

Challenges with accommodations are particularly salient to women. One interview with a female peacekeeper highlighted infrastructure and accommodations related challenges for women: “We encountered many difficulties, but we can overcome them. For example, if you are traveling in the countryside and want to go to the toilet, it is difficult to figure out a solution if you are the only woman on a mission. If you are two women it is okay, but if you are the only woman in the convoy, it is not easy.” An interviewee in a leadership position later indicated that leaders plan to send many more women to areas that currently have only one woman. The overall consensus in the validation workshop suggests that it can sometimes be a challenge to deploy as the sole woman in a contingent because women have different needs than men (e.g. with respect to a toilet), so they may feel uncomfortable asking for special accommodations.

Other senior leaders also highlighted similar challenges, emphasizing that certain mission areas pose higher risks, which can hinder women’s full participation. For example, in missions like the one in Mali, the increased use of improvised explosives demands the deployment of EOD forces to distant areas. These mission requirements often mean personnel need to spend extended periods, sometimes up to 15 days, in transit. Such conditions, including limited access to appropriate facilities like bathrooms and accommodations, present practical obstacles for women’s deployment alongside men. Accordingly, women believe that it is often the specific circumstances of the mission itself that impede women’s ability to fully participate and function effectively.

### **Respondents received support transitioning back after deployment**

According to the FFF, RCAF personnel are granted 30 days leave after successful completion of their tenure and upon returning from mission, to be united with their families. For transitioning out of the military into civilian lives, there is some assistance from the Cambodian Veteran Association, including networking, pension filing, and job search.

When transitioning back to life at home, most respondents received assistance from the UN (91%), a formal programme in the Armed Forces (72%), and the Government (72%). Women were more likely than men to report receiving support from the UN (93% of women and 91% of men), the RGC (75% of women and 71% of men), or their supervisor (52% of women and 32% of men), while men are more likely to receive support from formal programmes in the RCAF (74% of men versus 70% of women) and family (3% of men and 0% of women). Women (52%) were significantly more likely than men (32%) to report receiving help transitioning from their supervisor. Participants in the validation workshop suggested that women received such support.

In an interview, one female peacekeeper said, “All leaders support soldiers equally... but only female leaders always encourage female [personnel] to join together, to gather together to share their experiences and provide good advice and ideas. [In these spaces] soldiers can express their opinions and suggestions without any fear and they can discuss both work and family.” This means that female supervisors have established and fostered an informal community of female peacekeepers that is available to help women transition back to life at home after a mission.

Additional evidence suggests that, upon returning from a mission, female personnel may be more inclined to discuss family and mental health concerns with female (versus male) supervisors. One female peacekeeper mentioned, “Some of my colleagues with families, when they stay away [from home] and they have some issue with their husband or children... if [she is] offered an opportunity

to extend her mission, she can talk to her female supervisor freely about these problems so they can [help] solve the problem.” She also noted, “With issues regarding mental health, female officers can talk to female supervisors more freely because, sometimes, men cannot understand women’s health conditions, but female supervisors do understand [these concerns].” The significance of the informal network that female supervisors have created for female peacekeepers in Cambodia is even further realized when considering that some female personnel serve under male supervisors. In these cases, this network provides access to a support system that some female peacekeepers might not have access to otherwise. Ultimately, the network of female peacekeepers in Cambodia ensures that all female personnel have access to a community that can help them navigate the transition back to home life after serving in a peace operation.

**Table 6.1: Who helped you transition/reintegrate back to your home country after the MOST RECENT UN peace operation to which you were deployed? Select all that apply.**

	Men	Women	Total
The UN	91%	93%	91%
Formal programme in the RCAF	74%	70%	72%
Government	71%	75%	72%
Supervisor	32%	52%	40%
Friends	2%	1%	2%
Family	3%	0%	2%
Colleagues	3%	3%	3%
Mentors	1%	0%	1%
No one	2%	0%	0%

**Personnel engage in networking opportunities while on mission**

While the majority of respondents engaged in mentorship and networking while deployed, as shown in Table 6.2, the majority of that networking (62% total, including 58% of men and 67% of women) is limited to informal networking groups. However, 37% of women have been integrated into a group for female personnel.

**Table 6.2: What type of networking/mentorship programme, if any, did you participate in during ANY of the UN peace operations to which you have been deployed?**

	Men	Women	Total
Group for female personnel	7%	37%	19%
Group for male personnel	11%	5%	9%
Formal mentorship/networking programme facilitated by the Armed Forces	37%	44%	40%
<b>Informal networking groups (such as sportsteams, regular cultural activities, WhatsApp or other chat groups, etc.)</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>62%</b>
I did not participate in any networking/mentorship groups	18%	13%	16%

### There are opportunities to receive gender training while on mission

In addition to pre-deployment training, there are also training opportunities offered during deployment. As shown in Table 6.3, 93% of all respondents, (93% of men and 93% of women), reported attending at least one gender training during their deployment. When it came to specialized training however, the numbers dropped. 45% took the training on sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), 28% of respondents attended a general gender training and 35% participated in a specialized gender training, such as prevention of sexual violence or civilian protection.

**Table 6.3: Is gender training offered during deployment?**

	Men	Women	Total
Training on the prevention of SEA	50%	39%	45%
General gender training	25%	31%	28%
Gender training for leadership	8%	8%	8%
<b>Specialized gender training, such as prevention of sexual violence or civilian protection</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>35%</b>
Institutional harassment training	10%	8%	9%

## Main Barriers

### Some personnel have financial difficulties while serving on a UN peace mission

Overall, the majority of respondents indicated that they did not experience financial troubles while serving on a UN mission. Despite receiving extra pay for deployment, some personnel reported having some kind of financial difficulty while deployed. 36% of deployed personnel, (39% of men and 33% of women), reported some financial trouble during the mission. Additionally about 10% of them (including 13% of women and 7% of men) stated that they had to rely on extended family for financial support, and 11% (11% of men and 9% of women) had difficulty paying medical or other bills.

Participants in the validation workshop suggest that financial difficulties are a function of the variable payment protocol on mission. In other words, financial difficulties may be a by-product of the different ways that pay is processed between the UN and the RCAF. As a result, some personnel receive payments on time while others must wait for their pay to process, causing a delay in payment.

**Table 6.4: Have you had any of the following financial troubles while serving on a UN peace mission? Select all that apply.**

	Men	Women	Total
Difficulty paying rent/with housing	2%	8%	4%
Difficulty paying medical or other bills	11%	9%	11%
Difficulty paying for school fees	7%	5%	6%
Having to rely on extended family for financial support	7%	13%	10%
Having to rely on friends/community for financial support	1%	5%	2%
Not applicable	67%	61%	64%

To effectively support personnel in handling financial challenges during missions, our recommendations are as follows:

- Establish financial support programmes that directly address the unique financial challenges encountered during missions.
- Offer financial literacy classes to enable personnel to manage their finances more effectively, with a special focus on the allocation of earnings from peacekeeping missions.
- Increase allowances for purchasing personal items, as during the validation workshop participants highlighted that current allowances are insufficient. This increase would more accurately meet the daily requirements of personnel in the field. In line with feedback from validation workshop participants, we also recommend implementing a double payment system, allowing personnel to receive both RCAF and UN payments during missions.
- We suggest that returning personnel should be entitled to additional benefits, including extra leave and pay upon repatriation. These proposed measures are aimed at enhancing financial stability and support for peacekeeping personnel, thereby improving their overall well-being and effectiveness in operations.

### More women than men experienced problems with their personal relationships, spouses, family members, and children after returning from a peacekeeping mission

Overall, a limited number of personnel reported experiencing problems in their personal relationships. Among those who experienced issues upon returning home, women were more likely to expect issues with personal relationships (11% women versus 6% for men) or their spouses upon returning home (8% for women and only 5% for men). However, some problems are mitigated because of technology. According to an interview, “In fact, both men and women have no obstacles, but a few of them have never been away from their family and country. But now nothing is challenging because of modern technology. They can do video calls anytime with their family and it is just like they meet in person...”

**Table 6.5: Family problems upon returning from mission—What problems do you think you MIGHT have upon returning from a UN peace operation?**

	Men	Women	Total
Problems in my personal relationship	6%	11%	8%
Problems with my spouse	5%	8%	6%
Problems with family members	3%	7%	4%
Problems with my children	3%	4%	3%

To support personnel, particularly women, during and after missions, we recommend the development of relationship support initiatives. These should include counselling services and family support programmes tailored to address the unique challenges faced by personnel. Validation workshop participants also affirmed the importance of establishing gender-sensitive retention policies that accommodate the balance between work, family, and caregiving responsibilities, acknowledging the critical role of family support in this dynamic.

### Respondents have experienced problems on mission, particularly related to health, wellness, and security

Most personnel did encounter some type of problem while deployed. Only 27% of deployed respondents reported experiencing no problems on mission, among them 71% men and 29% women. Put differently, women are significantly less likely to report having experienced no problems on a mission.

Problems reported during missions are presented in the table below. Women are significantly more likely to report health problems, as well as problems with lodging/hygiene. Of all deployed women, 45% reported having experienced health problems during a mission and of all deployed men, 34% reported experiencing health problems on a mission. Of all deployed women, 9% reported having problems with lodging/hygiene but only 1% of male deployed personnel reported having experienced problems with lodging/hygiene on a mission.

Other major problems reported are driving accidents, problems adjusting to local culture, homesickness, and feeling unsafe during a mission. 54% of deployed personnel, (51% of men and 59% of women),



said that they felt homesick during the mission. 28% of respondents (29% of men and 27% of women) felt unsafe on missions due to conflict in the country. Furthermore, 10% of all deployed personnel, (12% of all women and 9% of all men) reported driving accidents during a mission. 13% of deployed personnel, (13% of women and 14% of men) reported difficulties adjusting to the local culture where they were deployed.

Another critical issue raised in both FGDs and the validation workshop is the prevalence of malaria and the ineffectiveness of Cambodian malaria vaccinations. Focus group discussants indicated that they were required to retake malaria vaccination and treatment on mission due the ineffectiveness of the malaria vaccine.

**Table 6.6: What problems, if any, did you face while in ANY of the UN peace operations to which you have been deployed?**

	Men	Women	Total
Driving accident	9%	12%	10%
Health problems	34%	45%	39%
Discomfort in the job as UN peacekeeper	9%	7%	8%
Problems adjusting to local culture	14%	13%	13%
Issues with payment	1%	1%	1%
Homesickness	51%	59%	54%
Problems with lodging/hygiene	1%	9%	4%
Problems with food	8%	10%	9%
Problems with peacekeepers from other countries	1%	3%	2%
Insecurity due to violence in the country	29%	27%	28%
Victim of a crime	0%	0%	0%
Relationship problems with someone back home	2%	5%	3%
Relationship problems in the host country (in the mission or with a local)	1%	3%	2%
Problems observing my own religions, traditions, and culture	3%	5%	4%
None/No problems	32%	19%	27%

To enhance mental health support for UN peacekeepers on missions, it is crucial to establish a comprehensive mental health framework. This includes providing training on stress management, resilience, and coping strategies, complemented by encouraging engagement in activities like sports, gardening, socializing, or cooking. Additionally, we recommend that peacekeepers are offered regular access to communication tools that can alleviate homesickness, and the presence of professional counselling services alongside peer support networks, which can offer essential emotional support. Ensuring comprehensive healthcare services and robust security protocols are also key in addressing health and safety concerns, ultimately promoting the well-being and effectiveness of peacekeepers in challenging environments.

### **Some personnel experienced harassment and discrimination while deployed**

Harassment can take many forms. The survey asked questions about different ways that harassment might have manifested in the mission. Overall, low levels of harassment were reported by survey respondents. For example, only 4% of deployed personnel, (4% of men and 5% of women) reported receiving unwanted texts while deployed. 4% of deployed personnel (4% of men and 5% of women), heard of or experienced unwanted picture-sharing on the internet while deployed, 6% of deployed personnel (5% of men and 6% of women), have heard jokes made about sexual orientation while deployed and 8% of deployed personnel, (7% men and 9% of women), have been called a name by colleagues while deployed.

With regard to experience on mission, 9% of deployed personnel in the sample (6% of men and 14% of women) have heard jokes being made about women while deployed. Women are significantly more likely to report having heard jokes about women while deployed. 6% of deployed personnel, (5% of men and 8% of women), have heard jokes made about physical appearance while deployed. Women are significantly more likely to have heard jokes made about their physical appearance. These results suggest that personnel on mission are statistically much more likely to report hearing jokes about gender and appearance compared to the personnel in the RCAF as a whole.

However, only 2% of deployed personnel, (6% of men and 4% of women) think that women were treated with less respect on missions. Only 7% of deployed personnel, (4% of men and 8% of women) heard of or received criticism for not fulfilling family duties while deployed.

74% of deployed personnel were free from experiencing discrimination (being favoured by a colleague). In particular, 74% of men and 73% of women never experienced or witnessed favouritism by a colleague on a mission. There was a notable discrepancy in the experience of unnecessary criticism between men and women among deployed personnel. Of the total, 85% reported not facing unnecessary criticism, which included 90% of men and 78% of women. On the other hand, while only 10% of men experienced unnecessary criticism, a significantly higher 22% of women reported encountering such criticism during their mission. This disparity highlights potential issues of unequal treatment by supervisors towards men and women in deployment settings.

FGDs revealed insights into the challenges women face. Participants mentioned harassment and discrimination as major barriers to women's meaningful participation in missions. Some were aware of these potential issues from pre-deployment training and attempted to avoid difficult situations. This point highlights the pervasive nature of harassment and discrimination in missions, with women often feeling the need to take measures to avoid harassment, instead of expecting a change in behaviour from the harassers.

The policy on harassment during missions is also unclear, complicating the situation for those who experience unwanted behaviour, such as unsolicited messages, images, name-calling, or criticism. This lack of a clear policy makes it challenging for victims to report these incidents and to hope for fair treatment or resolution.

### **Many personnel have heard stories or complaints about negative experiences on mission**

Most personnel have heard complaints about negative experiences of their colleagues while on mission. 22% of deployed personnel report having heard of women having a negative experience during a peace operation. Of them, 21% (19% of men and 26% of women) say that the negative stories from women did affect their decisions about deployment. 24% of deployed personnel report having heard of men having a negative experience. Of those who heard negative stories, 25% (20% of men and 28% of women) say that the negative stories from men did affect their decisions about deployment.

Focus group participants acknowledged that hearing about negative experiences in deployment did cause them to reconsider their decision to deploy. However, they also recognized that the benefits of deployment can often outweigh these concerns. They highlighted positives, such as learning new languages, bringing honour to their country, and enhancing their training and skills. Aware of the potential negative aspects, they prepared themselves accordingly and strove to proactively address these challenges, drawing motivation from the experiences shared by their colleagues.

Validation workshop participants also noted that it is important to make new recruits aware that the experience gained in mission areas is distinct to the respective mission. For instance, the well-developed infrastructure observed in South Sudan can vary significantly from one deployment to another, especially when compared to initial deployments. It is important to communicate clearly that even negative experiences can be a result of these varying dynamics, and that first deployments might inherently present more difficulties. These measures aim to provide comprehensive support, ensuring the well-being of personnel and facilitating effective adaptation to both mission environments and post-mission life.

Accordingly, to support newly deployed female peacekeepers, we recommend initiating a peer mentorship programme that pairs them with experienced female peacekeepers. This programme would provide new deployees with guidance and practical advice through regular mentor-mentee meetings and informal check-ins. Focusing on navigating mission-specific challenges, cultural adaptation, and personal safety, this initiative aims to ease the transition for new female personnel and enhance their effectiveness in mission environments.

### **The majority of personnel do not engage with locals. Women were significantly more likely to engage with locals, as well as with local women, than their male counterparts**

Some personnel engage with locals during their deployment. However, women are significantly more likely to do so. Per Table 6.7, 40% of deployed personnel indicated that they had never interacted with locals during their last peacekeeping mission, of which 67% are male and only 33% are female. Furthermore, as shown in Table 6.8, 60% of deployed personnel reported that they did not engage with local women on a regular basis (once a month or more), of which 80% are men and 20% are women. 44% of deployed personnel, (36% of men and 56% of women) said that they interacted with local women frequently, often at least once a month or more.

**Table 6.7: How often did you interact with the population in the host country during your MOST RECENT UN peace operation to which you were deployed?**

	Men	Women	Total
<b>Every day</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>14%</b>
Once a week	11%	12%	11%
Once every two-three weeks	10%	15%	12%
Once a month	6%	8%	7%
Once every few months	18%	10%	15%
Once during the deployment	1%	1%	1%
<b>Never</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>40%</b>

**Table 6.8: How often during your deployment did you interact directly with local women?**

	Men	Women	Total
<b>Every day</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>12%</b>
Once a week	4%	11%	7%
Two-three times a month	3%	13%	7%
Once a month	1%	4%	2%
Once every few months	7%	12%	9%
Once during the deployment	0%	4%	2%
<b>Never</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>60%</b>

**Table 6.9: In what ways did you interact with the population in the host country during the MOST RECENT UN peace operation to which you were deployed?**

	Men	Women	Total
Trained and/or monitored the local security forces	6%	11%	9%
Engaged in community-based work as a part of the deployment (e.g. civil-military cooperation activities, quick impact projects)	17%	13%	15%
Provided services to the community as a part of the deployment (e.g. health clinic, builds roads, etc.)	21%	14%	18%
Monitored local activities for situation reports	13%	12%	13%
Participated in patrols	19%	24%	21%
Engaged in civilian protection activities (e.g. refugee camps, etc.)	11%	15%	13%
Participated in local events (e.g. went to local church/mosque)	1%	3%	2%
Volunteered my own time to help the community	3%	4%	4%
Spent time with locals socially (e.g. Restaurants, shops etc.)	2%	4%	3%

During their most recent deployments, some personnel engaged with local communities, with women being notably more likely to do so than their male counterparts. Among the deployed personnel, 40% reported no interaction with locals during their last peacekeeping mission. Within this group, 67% were male and 33% were female. Additionally, 60% of the personnel did not regularly engage with local women (defined as at least once a month), consisting of 80% men and 20% women. Conversely, 44% of deployed personnel, (36% of men and 56% of women), reported frequent interactions with local women, often engaging at least once a month or more. This may be due to gendered expectations of women’s role to provide community support on mission.

The most frequent ways in which deployed personnel interacted with the local population include interactions during patrol (21%: 19% men and 24% women) or providing services to the community (i.e., services at a health clinic, building roads) as a part of the deployment (18%: 21% men and 14% women). Accordingly, women were more likely to engage with the local population as part of their patrol, while men were more likely to report interaction with the local population as a function of service provision.

To enhance engagement between UN peacekeeping personnel and local communities we recommend the creation of structured community interaction programmes, such as outreach activities and cultural exchange events, which facilitate meaningful connections. Incentives should be established for peacekeepers who regularly engage with locals, particularly women, to encourage consistent interaction. Providing training in cultural sensitivity and local languages will further empower personnel to communicate effectively. It’s also important to develop gender-specific engagement strategies that leverage the strengths of both male and female peacekeepers. Additionally, implementing monitoring mechanisms to track and report the frequency and quality of these interactions will help in evaluating and improving engagement efforts. These combined strategies aim to foster deeper mutual understanding and positive relations between peacekeepers and the communities they serve.

## Personnel do not know how to address sexual and gender based violence

Slightly under half (47%) of deployed personnel, (42% of men and 56% of women) feel prepared to handle a situation where a victim was raped by her husband. This indicates that men are significantly less likely to feel prepared to handle such a situation.

62% of deployed personnel, (57% of men and 67% of women) would feel prepared to handle a situation with a victim of rape by a police officer.

Around one-third of deployed respondents, (35% of men and 33% of women), feel prepared to handle situations involving rape victims where the perpetrator is alleged to be a peacekeeper. Perceptions exist about gender roles in such situations, which emphasize women's role of gathering detailed information in rape cases, while men are often associated with tasks like driving.

However, there is a general lack of preparation among deployed personnel to address rape, especially in the contexts of spouse and peacekeeper involvement. Cultural factors play a significant role in this, particularly in Cambodian society where discussing such issues is taboo and shame is differently attributed to men and women.

During the validation workshop, it was confirmed that personnel are often aware of how to report sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), but they may lack training in directly addressing it, as this responsibility does not typically fall within the purview of a peacekeeper in a given unit. Instead, this responsibility is generally assigned to the MP and joint investigation teams. These groups collaborate with civil officials to manage cases of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA).

UN Police is also pivotal in these scenarios. Its role is especially important in terms of coordinating with local authorities and facilitating the reporting process. The workshop emphasized the necessity of a clear and confidential reporting system within the UN framework. This system is crucial for handling accusations of misconduct while maintaining the anonymity of the individuals involved.

Moreover, within the framework of troop- and police-contributing-countries, specific roles are designated for handling these issues. For instance, there are often women focal points within platoons who manage gender-specific matters. These focal points are responsible for addressing incidents internally, particularly minor cases, to avoid escalating them to higher authorities like the MP. However, in more severe cases escalation is necessary, and the individuals involved may face serious consequences, including dismissal or blacklisting from future deployments.

The workshop underlined the importance of internal mechanisms within units or platoons for managing minor offenses. For more serious or inter-platoon issues, transparency and accountability are critical, and concealment of misconduct is not permissible. This approach ensures that all cases of SGBV and related misconduct are handled with the appropriate level of seriousness and due process.

To effectively tackle sexual violence, harassment, and discrimination within UN peacekeeping missions, it is imperative to ensure comprehensive training for all personnel. This should encompass handling situations of sexual violence and harassment, integrated into pre-deployment, in-service, and deployment training programmes. The training should focus on identification, prevention, and response strategies.

Alongside trainings on handling situations of sexual violence and harassment on mission, we recommend

the implementation and enforcement of robust anti-harassment and discrimination policies, complete with clear, accessible reporting mechanisms to ensure accountability and promote a zero-tolerance culture. Additionally, all personnel must be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to respond to and prevent these issues, including training in cultural sensitivity, empathy, and appropriate intervention techniques, thereby fostering a respectful, inclusive, and safe environment for all peacekeepers.



## ISSUE AREA 7: CAREER VALUE

Low

The career value issue area measures whether deployment to peace operations helps the careers of military personnel. This, in turn, affects whether or not men and women are likely to deploy and redeploy. Women who have deployed may choose not to redeploy if it is not advantageous to their career prospects.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

#### Opportunities

- Peacekeeping in UN missions is integrated into the national defence strategy.
- Peacekeeping is formally considered in decisions regarding promotion.
- Personnel think there are career advantages to deploying. 96% of deployed personnel, and 94% of all personnel, believe that deployment to a UN peace operation would advance their career.
- Personnel have reported that extra salary from deployment helps their well-being. 87% of respondents, (88% of men and 87% of women), reported that UN deployment gives extra salary.
- Peacekeepers are memorialized in Cambodia and surveyed personnel reported that they are recognized for their peacekeeping contributions. A majority of respondents indicated that peacekeepers are recognized for their deployment by the Government (87% total, including 85% of men and 82% of women) and the Armed Forces (55% total, including 58% of men and 51% of women).

#### Barriers

- Women (91%) were significantly less likely than men (96%) to say peacekeeping deployment advances their career.

#### Recommendations

The RCAF should:

- Develop and implement gender-responsive career development programmes that address the challenges women face. The RCAF should ensure that these programmes provide equal access to career advancement resources, mentorship, and opportunities for training and development.
- Establish mentorship and sponsorship initiatives that support women in the form of providing guidance, networking opportunities, and advocacy.
- Make sure that the institution is transparent with regards to its promotion criteria and processes.

#### Opportunities

##### Peacekeeping in UN missions is integrated into the national defence strategy

According to the FFF, peacekeeping is part of the national defence strategy. In its Pentagonal Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency in Cambodia, Phase 1, the RGC outlines its achievements in international affairs, emphasizing its contribution to UN peacekeeping missions through the deployment of Blue Helmet forces.

The integration of peacekeeping into national security doctrines is reflected in the allocation of resources for deployments and reforms to improve Cambodia's contributions to peacekeeping. This policy is documented in Cambodia's Defence White Papers of 2006 and 2022, and the Defence Strategy Review of 2013, indicating the role of peacekeeping as an element of national defence policy.

### **Peacekeeping is formally considered in promotion decisions**

According to the FFF, deployment plays a significant role in career advancement, with UN assessments being integrated into Cambodia's national promotion system. Deployed personnel benefit from better incentives and compensation, which includes support for their families. Cambodian troops contributing to UN missions receive roughly US\$1,400 or more, in addition to their national military salary. The FFF also indicates that these personnel are more likely to receive promotions upon their return.

In addition to career benefits, peacekeeping deployment is considered valuable for skill enhancement. It offers troops practical and international experiences, including certifications in areas like demining and driving, thereby raising the standards of Cambodian peacekeepers. Engaging in multidimensional peace operations and collaborating with troops from different countries provides Cambodian forces the opportunity to acquire technical and strategic knowledge. These international experiences are instrumental in reforming domestic strategies when troops return to continue serving their nation and people.

Furthermore, since Cambodia's peacekeeping deployments are 12 months long, the MoD and RGC often take deployment into consideration for promotion as an appreciation for their sacrifice and services, especially for junior officers and NCOs. However, promotion opportunities may be delayed or forfeited if a peacekeeper has disciplinary issues or has been reported for poor performance.

The validation workshop underscored that the Government's promotion policies consider in-service training and mission completion. A workshop participant shared her experience, underscoring how women's contributions are recognized and celebrated. She recounted, "I had been selected to be a speaker at UN Geneva and attended a leadership and governance workshop with the MoWA. I was interviewed by the Minister and spoke at the MoD and the Peace Gallery." Her outstanding performance and contributions were further highlighted through posts on national news pages and the Asia Euro forum. Notably, her achievements and those of other Blue Helmet women were commemorated with a plaque, featured on the UN webpage and disseminated in the New York City subway. This recognition culminated in her receiving a medal of appreciation upon completion of the mission, celebrating her significant achievements.

### **Personnel understand there are career advantages to deploying**

96% of deployed personnel and 94% of all personnel believe that deployment to a UN peace operation would advance their career. Similarly, 69% of respondents, (71% of men and 65% of women) report that deployment can improve their resume/CV. 66% of respondents, (77% of men and 84% of women) believe they will learn new skills on a peacekeeping mission. Interviews with key personnel have illuminated the multifaceted benefits that peacekeeping missions provide, particularly for women. One interviewee emphasized how these missions contribute to personal development, stating, "They not only expand their skills and knowledge but they also improve their language skills." This perspective highlights the professional and personal growth opportunities available through such deployments.



Furthermore, interviewees discussed how deployment enables both men and women to earn recognition and honour at various levels. This includes not just enhancing their capabilities and language skills, but also gaining esteem for themselves, their families, and their nation. Another interview affirmed that deployment is held in high regard within the RCAF, pointing out, “One is for national honour and also for individual honour to participate in the mission, and when returned, they are recognized by the UN, awarded the medal of honour.” This recognition from the UN symbolizes the significant contributions and achievements of those who participate in these missions.

Additionally, these experiences foster international friendships and networks.

Focus group and validation workshop participants indicated that mission deployment enables women to better support their families, often helping their children to resume their studies and contributing to daily livelihood needs.

The benefits continue upon returning from the mission. According to one interview, women leverage their expanded skills to secure jobs with the UN, civil NGOs, and often receive promotions. This professional advancement goes hand in hand with personal development, as women return home with marketable job skills and access to career opportunities. The interviewee also noted positive personal outcomes, such as meeting life partners and building stable family lives, underscoring the viewpoint that deployment is a valuable opportunity.

Furthermore, there were no reports of difficulties upon return with respect to finding a job. According to the FFF and survey, 96% (97% of men and 95% of women), of personnel returned to their old jobs once they returned from deployment.

### **Extra salary from UN peacekeeping deployment helps personnel with living costs**

Deployment also helps personnel financially. 87% of respondents, (88% of men and 87% of women) reported that UN deployment gives extra salary.

One interview highlighted the utility of the extra salary for military personnel, “The budget supported by the UN for the force personnel helps to support their living condition for them to have enough capital to improve livelihood for their family.” This support is crucial in enhancing the living standards of the personnel and their families, making participation in these missions not only a matter of honour and experience but also a means of financial support.

### **Peacekeepers are celebrated in Cambodia**

According to the FFF, personnel receive recognition for their peacekeeping contributions. In the survey all but one respondent indicated that peacekeepers receive some form of recognition upon returning from deployment. 87% of survey respondents (85% of men and 82% of women) said that peacekeepers are recognized by the Government for their deployment. 55% of respondents, (58% of men and 51% of women) reported that peacekeepers are recognized by the Armed Forces for their deployment. 32% of survey respondents, (33% of men and 30% of women) indicated that peacekeepers are recognized for their deployment by the media. Importantly, 40% of respondents (41% of all men and 39% of all women) said that peacekeepers are recognized by their family and friends for their contributions.

Since 2006, Cambodia has been observing the International Day of UN Peacekeepers on 29 May annually, as highlighted by the FFF. This commemoration includes erecting statues of peacekeepers at the PKO and the national Win-Win Memorial. The FFF also notes that medals are awarded to peacekeepers for their service, and stories of peacekeeping are featured in RCAF internal communications and histories.

The country celebrates a national Peace day, where peacekeepers' contributions are recognized and appreciated, regardless of rank. Participants in the validation workshop shared personal reflections, noting the pride their families feel and the appreciation they receive from the Government for their service as peacekeepers. The send-off and homecoming ceremonies for peacekeepers are widely covered by live TV, social media, and news, often attended by high-ranking Government officials, military leaders, diplomats, UN representatives, military attachés, and families of the peacekeepers.

Furthermore, the national peacekeeping centre publishes an annual magazine highlighting the experiences of peacekeepers. This is part of a broader effort to showcase their stories to the world. Validation workshop participants also mentioned that beyond the peacekeepers day, there are larger celebrations supported and attended by ministers, reflecting the high level of recognition and support that peacekeeping missions receive in Cambodia.

The focus groups also indicated that women feel they are recognized for peacekeeping contributions. Female participants expressed that they felt recognized by receiving medals, appreciation letters, and a welcome party. Some focus group participants were promoted, and women were also encouraged to deploy again.

## **Main barriers**

### **Women are significantly less likely to say peacekeeping deployment advances their career.**

While the majority of personnel believe that peacekeeping deployment advances their career, women are significantly less likely to say so. As mentioned above, 94% of personnel believed that deployment to a UN peace operation would advance their career. However, women were significantly less likely to say so. While 96% of male respondents said that peacekeeping deployment advances their career, only 91% of female respondents said this. Regardless of the statistically significant difference, the rate of women saying that peacekeeping advances their career is still very high.

To support women in the RCAF, it is recommended to develop gender-responsive career development programmes providing equal access to advancement resources, training, and mentorship. Additionally, establishing mentorship and sponsorship initiatives will offer women essential guidance and networking opportunities. Ensuring transparency in promotion criteria and processes is also vital, enabling a clear understanding of career progression opportunities. These steps will foster a more inclusive environment and promote professional growth for women in the RCAF.



## ISSUE AREA 8: TOP-DOWN LEADERSHIP

Low

The top-down leadership issue area explores the impact of political will (or lack thereof) among those in influential positions on women's deployment and meaningful participation in peace operations.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

#### Opportunities

- Women are more likely to be a part of professional networks. Each unit has its own gender working group advisor to assist them and relay information to the higher chain of command.
- A majority of personnel have at least one mentor within the RCAF. 73% of respondents, (68% of men and 79% of women), said they have at least one mentor within the RCAF who can provide guidance about their career.
- Most personnel are willing to approach leadership to report on job and family-related matters (88% of respondents, including 90% of men and 86% of women) or misconduct (71% of men and 80% of women).
- There are male allies who advance and support women and women's rights. A majority of respondents said they know a male colleague who has corrected problematic behaviour towards women (55%, including 55% of men and 54% of women) or stood up for women who have been discriminated against (50% total, including 55% of women and 46% men).
- There is a gender mainstreaming policy, and senior leadership acknowledge gender mainstreaming. 46% of respondents, (42% of men and 50% of women), are aware of the official gender mainstreaming policy.

#### Barriers

- Few personnel have had a woman as an immediate supervisor. 90% of respondents, (88% of men and 93% of women), reported that their immediate supervisor is male.
- There is a formal women's association but it is mostly unknown. Only 38% of respondents said they knew about this association.
- Senior leadership and officers reach out to personnel regarding training on gender (72% total, including 76% of men and 67% of women) or peacekeeping (69%, including 77% of men and 58% of women), but more so to men.
- Less than half of senior leaders and personnel are trained on gender issues. 43% of leadership, (19% of men and 24% of women), have attended general gender training designed for officers and members of all ranks. 49% of respondents, (43% of men and 57% of women), reported attending gender training at basic academy.
- Most personnel do not have a clear understanding of UNSCR 1325. The vast majority of respondents (89%), including 93% of men and 91% of women, have not heard of UNSCR 1325.
- While there is a gender mainstreaming policy in place and the RCAF reports on the status of gender mainstreaming, there is no supplemental guidance for implementing the policy, such as a toolkit or needs assessment.

#### Recommendations

NPMEC/RGC should:

- To ensure the successful drafting of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women Peace and Security (RPA WPS) by the end of this year, it is essential to include the perspectives of women

in peacekeeping. Garnering support from all ASEAN Member States and relevant sectoral bodies, particularly the ASEAN Commission for the Protection of Women's and Children's Rights, is crucial for maintaining the momentum of RPA WPS implementation. This will involve consultations with a diverse range of stakeholders, emphasizing the value of their ideas and suggestions. Women peacekeepers, in particular, should be actively invited to participate in these discussions to provide their unique insights. The consultation process should be structured to include one discussion at the national level and two at the sub-national level, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive approach to the development of the RPA WPS.

- Develop and implement gender-responsive career development programmes specifically designed to address the unique challenges faced by women.
- Ensure equal access for women to career advancement resources, including comprehensive training and development programmes to help increase the number of female leaders.
- Establish mentorship and sponsorship initiatives targeted at supporting women. These should focus on providing personalized guidance, networking opportunities, and advocacy for women's career progression within the RCAF.
- Maintain transparency in the institution's promotion criteria and processes. This involves clear communication and fair implementation of these criteria, ensuring that all personnel understand and have equal opportunities to advance their careers.
- Provide resources and institutional support to existing professional networks for women.
- Transform the RCAF's existing pre-deployment gender booklet into a comprehensive, practical gender toolkit to enhance gender mainstreaming efforts.
- Expand and mandate gender training courses for RCAF leadership to address gaps in understanding gender issues and UNSCR 1325.

## Opportunities

### Women are more likely to be a part of a professional network

Only 14% of total respondents (20% of women and 10% of men) said that they belong to a professional organization within the Armed Forces. Women are more likely to be a part of these networks. There is no union or other kind of professional organization within the Armed Forces. Informal organizations also exist, such as the Kick-boxing club, Veteran organization, Soccer club, Volleyball club, and the Kun Khmer club.

According to the FFF, each RCAF unit, including NPMEC, has its own Gender Unit (otherwise called "working group") that is charged with gender mainstreaming and gender advisory and led by the most senior and trained female officer. These advisors assist and relay information to the higher chain of command. At the highest level, there is a MoD gender working group headed by a Secretary of State, and a High Command HQ gender working group headed by a 4-star female General. Regarding the functioning of gender working groups, an example can be drawn from the MoD, which utilizes a Telegram group. This platform is used by the gender working group to disseminate and report information to subordinates efficiently. Similarly, each ministry has its own gender mainstreaming group, ensuring consistent communication and collaboration on gender-related issues within their respective areas. The leadership of these working groups is typically spearheaded by a team leader who coordinates these efforts.

The size of each gender unit varies but they are usually composed of the highest ranking women in the respective units. Additionally, gender unit advisors are tasked with empowering women

through active participation in decision-making and increased participation in all levels of the Armed Forces. These focal points address issues related to family, misconduct, and stress management, and share information with subordinates. According to the validation workshop, the level of knowledge of these mechanisms is limited.

### **Most personnel have at least one mentor within the RCAF**

Having role models and mentors is important for personnel to succeed in any institution. These role models and mentors also might help advocate for individual women, provide information about opportunities, and generally serve as guides for how to be successful in the career. The more successful women there are in the institution, the more opportunities women have to find role models and mentors. According to the FFF, some female trailblazers are well-known. For example, LTCOL. Chea Maysaros served in the UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan and Lebanon from junior to senior officer positions up to Deputy Commanding Officer. A Siem Reap native, she underwent several local and overseas trainings in military and peacekeeping operations and has been deployed as a MO and Contingent Officer.

Moreover, 73% of respondents, (68% of men and 79% of women), had at least one mentor within the RCAF who can provide guidance about their career. This means that the majority of women have mentors, but there are still many women and men who do not have a mentor. There is no formal women's mentorship programme, or any other well-known policy or practice on the role of female mentorship in the security institution.

### **Most personnel are willing to approach leadership to report on job and family-related matters or misconduct**

Personnel generally believe that their supervisors listen to them. About 88% of respondents, (90% of men and 86% of women) report that they are willing or very willing to approach leadership about reporting job-related matters. 75% of respondents, (71% of men and 80% of women), feel they are willing to approach leadership about reporting misconduct. Moreover, 60% of respondents, (60% of men and 62% of women) disagree with the statement: "Senior members of the Cambodian Armed Forces often refuse to listen to the experiences of members of the Cambodian Armed Forces of junior rank."

The validation workshop emphasized the importance of discipline in missions. It was noted that when there are suspicions of drug use among personnel, examinations are conducted, followed by appropriate penalties. If an individual has a history of misconduct during deployment, they are typically not redeployed, but are given a chance to reform their behaviour. However, in cases of severe misconduct, the individual will be repatriated and marked as ineligible for future deployments.

### **There are male allies who advance and support women and women's rights**

A majority of respondents said they know a male colleague who has corrected problematic behaviour towards women (55% total, including 55% of men and 54% of women) or stood up for women who have been discriminated against (50% total – 55% of women and 46% men). A majority of women reported that men mentor female colleagues (50% of women surveyed), stand up for women who have been discriminated against (55% of women surveyed), and correct problematic behaviour (54% of women surveyed). This is encouraging because it suggests that men have some training and experiences in promoting women's careers within the RCAF.

**Table 8.1: Do you know of MEN in your organization who have done any of the following?  
Select all that apply**

	Men	Women	Total
Officially mentored a female colleague	29%	50%	38%
Unofficially mentored a female colleague	14%	30%	21%
Stood up for women who were being discriminated against	46%	55%	50%
Helped promote women in rank	16%	28%	21%
Promoted policies that help women	35%	49%	41%
Talked with their male colleagues to correct problematic behaviour towards women	55%	54%	55%
None of the above	28%	17%	24%

### There is a gender mainstreaming policy and senior leadership acknowledge gender mainstreaming

According to the FFF, the RCAF has an official gender mainstreaming policy. The current national gender mainstreaming policy is the Neary Rattanak V Five-Year Strategic Plan for 2019-2023.<sup>43</sup> This plan integrates all of Cambodia’s national development policies and strategies in all sectors, including defence and peacekeeping. The MoD’s gender working group has implemented this overarching gender mainstreaming policy within the RCAF by releasing the five-year strategic plan (2016-2020)<sup>44</sup> for gender mainstreaming and promotion of women in the RCAF.<sup>45</sup>

46% of survey respondents, (42% of men and 50% of women), were aware of the official gender mainstreaming policy. There are also plans to operationalize the policy. For example, in an interview, leaders stated, “In national defence, which is a priority sector, we, as part of the leadership of the Ministry of Defence, drafted internal policies and plans such as a strategic plan for gender mainstreaming in the military. (...) We are now working on the next five-year strategic plan. This is a vision aimed to align all works in RCAF. If there are no standards, policy, and law approved by the Government, there will be no internal implementation plan within the military, and there will also be no direction and vision to promote women. Furthermore, one key point in the gender mainstreaming strategy in RCAF is peacekeeping deployment under the auspices of the United Nations. In these missions, men and women serve equally under the UN, and as a troop contributing country, we are striving to increase women’s participation in peacekeeping missions annually to respond to the UN requests.”

In public statements, senior leaders and high-ranking officials have emphasized the importance of gender mainstreaming policy. One interview highlighted the strong political will of the Prime Minister and the gender sensitivity of the NPMEC Director, noting that such political will isn’t limited to top leadership but extends to sector leaders as well.

<sup>43</sup> The MoWA will release an updated version of this strategic plan (Neary Rattanak VI) early next year.

<sup>44</sup> It was confirmed during the validation workshop that the policy period is accurate. It was indeed only until 2020 that this plan was implemented. There may be some continued efforts, but this is unclear, hence it will need to be updated.

<sup>45</sup> This document is only available in Khmer.

Another interview revealed the RCAF senior leadership's enthusiasm for gender inclusivity. They have consistently voiced the importance of women's participation in the RCAF and in peacekeeping operations, advocating for equality and non-discrimination. This perspective marks a shift from traditional views, recognizing women's capabilities in all areas, including leadership roles.

However, there is some ambiguity in the implementation of gender mainstreaming. An interview pointed out the lack of a national strategy for incorporating women, with efforts currently centred on the strategic plan of the MoD. This plan focuses on increasing women's participation and promoting them to leadership positions, emphasizing equal deployment of women in peace operations. Women are now present in all missions involving the country.

The validation workshop brought attention to the gender mainstreaming policy and the NPMEC leadership's involvement in a UN conference, where they announced initiatives to mobilize female soldiers, especially for chief of staff positions in initial deployments. Despite the overall commitment to gender mainstreaming, its application seems slow, highlighting the need for more effective and responsive strategic and policy updates.

## **Main barriers**

### **Few personnel have had a woman as an immediate supervisor**

While women and men have served in leadership positions (see above), 90% of respondents, (88% of men and 93% of women) reported that their immediate supervisor in the Armed Forces is a male. A little over a third of respondents (34%), have reported ever serving under an immediate female supervisor. This means that more can be done to better understand if women are being promoted at the same rate as men. If they are not, then more should be done to understand why.

To address gender disparities in leadership, we recommend the creation of specialized career development programmes that are responsive to the unique challenges faced by women. These programmes should focus on providing equal access to a range of career advancement resources, particularly emphasizing comprehensive training and development opportunities. The goal is to equip women with the necessary skills and competencies to excel in leadership roles, thereby actively increasing female representation in higher positions.

### **There is no formal women's association**

While some respondents reported (38%) hearing of a formal women's association in the institution, the validation workshop indicated that women's organizations are informal, most often organized via social media communication.

Interviews also highlighted that gender networking is predominantly coordinated informally, led by a female general known for her community engagement, such as visiting homes post-childbirth with gifts. One interviewee described these activities, noting, "They disseminate information and publicize about SEA within the workplace. If there is any problem, they will visit families, engage in social work to raise awareness. They also produce an annual report each year to assess progress in different units and share news about their activities." Despite these efforts, the validation workshop confirmed that this association remains largely unrecognized.

We recommend the establishment of a formal women's association within the RCAF, building upon and formalizing the existing informal networks of women's organizations. This structured association would provide a more cohesive and effective platform for addressing women's issues and promoting their interests within the RCAF.

The establishment of a women's organization within the RCAF could serve as a formal mechanism for leadership to directly engage with female personnel. This organization would facilitate the discussion of their concerns and

the sharing of vital information and experiences related to peacekeeping deployment. It would also help in disseminating accurate information about deployment criteria, thus addressing the issues highlighted in Issue area 2 and enhancing the overall effectiveness of peacekeeping efforts.

Although numerous training opportunities exist for gender sensitivity, senior leadership and officers predominantly reach out to men when offering training on gender or peacekeeping issues.

In terms of gender-sensitive training, a number of officers are sent to overseas training provided by global partners such as Australia and the European Union, on gender topics including genders in operations, WPS, and national investigation officers. Australia, and more precisely the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade through the defence cooperation programme, organized another training course on child protection and gender in peacekeeping operations, held at the Oudong training institute and successfully completed by 25 trainees. Australia has also organized a short course of four to six weeks (full-day course) targeting men and women from the RCAF, entitled Investigation to Tackle Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, about gender in peace operations and national investigations.

Senior leaders appear to be doing a good job reaching out to personnel about opportunities but there is a bias. There is a discrepancy between the treatment of men and women. 72% of respondents, (76% of men and 67% of women), reported that senior or superior officers reached out to them regarding training on gender (e.g. training on gender equality, SGBV, etc.). 69% of respondents, (77% of men and 58% of women) reported that senior or superior officers have reached out to them regarding participating in training on peacekeeping. Senior leaders are much more likely to reach out to men about opportunities, even gender training, than women. This presents a problem because Issue area 2 demonstrated that there is a skills gap between men and women. If leaders are not reaching out equally to women about training opportunities, then this will exacerbate that existing gap.

To mitigate bias, we recommend ensuring equal access for women to career advancement resources in the RCAF, including comprehensive training and development programmes to increase female leadership. Additionally, we recommend the establishment of mentorship and sponsorship initiatives specifically for women that may offer personalized guidance and networking opportunities.

It is also important to maintain transparency in promotion criteria and processes, ensuring fairness and clarity for all personnel. Developing a mechanism to ensure complete transparency would benefit women in the RCAF and mitigate issues of bias with regard to promotions and career advancement.

### **Less than half of senior leaders and personnel are trained on gender issues**

According to the FFF, new recruits in Non-commissioned Officer (NCO) school, military regions and in most military units undergo basic training that currently does not include mandatory gender training. However, basic gender training is provided for new peacekeeping recruits as part of their pre-deployment training. According to the validationworkshop, gender training is not incorporated into the in-service training of soldiers, NCOs and even officers at the academy. However, this sort of specialized training is available through peacekeeping pre-deployment training.

Although senior leaders often publicly recognize the importance of gender mainstreaming, many remain untrained in gender-specific issues. The FFF notes that while gender training courses are not mandatory for senior leaders, they are kept informed about the developments in gender programmes and the critical need for achieving gender parity. Moreover, among leadership, about a third (34%), including 43% of men in leadership and 43% of women in leadership, have attended gender training specifically designed for leadership. 43% of leadership, (19% of men and 24% women), have attended general gender training designed for officers and members of all ranks. 49% of respondents, (43% of men and 57% of women), reported attending gender training at basic academy.



The fact that more women than men have attended gender training reflects the idea that “gender” is perceived as a woman’s issue. Both men and women must be invested in understanding gender issues, both within peacekeeping operations and within the RCAF. According to the validation workshop, officers receive gender training during pre-deployment but may forget what they have learned. Validation workshops led to a consensus that regularly held training may be beneficial to enhance information retention among personnel.

### **Most personnel do not have a clear understanding of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325**

UNSCR 1325 is a pivotal resolution underscoring the importance of gender mainstreaming in peace and conflict processes at the national level. Such high-level resolutions are instrumental in shaping national policies and provide a framework for justifying gender policies within institutions. In response to UNSCR 1325, Cambodia has played a significant role to lead the development of the first ASEAN RPA WPS, which was adopted at the ASEAN Summit during Cambodia’s Chair of ASEAN in 2022. Currently, it is exploring the process to localize the RPA WPS and the potential development of the National Action Plan (NAP) on WPS, with the support of UN Women. In this connection, Cambodia has also implemented a NAP to Prevent Violence against Women for 2019-2023, focused on issues like domestic and sexual violence, human trafficking, and VAW. Despite some progress and the active role of the RGC to amplify the significance of UNSCR 1325 externally, a survey revealed limited awareness among personnel within the RCAF. 89% of respondents, (93% of men and 91% of women), indicated they had not heard of the resolution.

Considering the identified gaps in leadership knowledge about gender issues and UNSCR 1325, we recommend the expansion and mandatory implementation of gender training courses for RCAF leadership. This will ensure that leaders are well-informed and equipped to address gender-related matters effectively.

### **There is no gender toolkit/report/needs assessment**

While there is a gender mainstreaming policy in place and the RCAF reports on the status of gender mainstreaming, there is no supplemental guidance for implementing the policy, such as a toolkit or needs assessment. According to the FFF, there is no official gendered needs assessment conducted to understand what the needs are of women in the institution. This was confirmed during interviews. Yet, 46% of respondents, (47% of men and 43% of women), said they were aware of a gender toolkit.

According to the FFF, each RCAF gender committee/working group submits an annual gender mainstreaming report to their respective ministry. In addition to the Neary Rattanak plan, the working groups follow regional and international guidelines including but not limited to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), guidelines for youth, and ASEAN guidelines on gender mainstreaming. According to the validation workshop, a gender strategic plan is not visible and easily accessible by even senior officers in the RCAF.

The validation workshop concluded that the current gender booklet in the RCAF for pre-deployment, while not explicitly a gender toolkit, could potentially be adapted into one. This recommendation aligns with the existing manual, which offers valuable insights. The workshop also highlighted the increasing interest and emphasis on gender within the army. This growing focus presents an opportunity to develop more systematic training, toolkits, and resources to enhance the practice of gender mainstreaming. Currently, the production of the gender booklet has been in response to a recommendation from the UN, indicating a proactive approach towards addressing gender issues in the military context.

We recommend transforming the RCAF’s existing pre-deployment gender booklet into a comprehensive gender toolkit. This adaptation should build upon the booklet’s valuable insights, incorporating systematic training modules, resources, and tools for effective gender mainstreaming. Developing this toolkit will further the RCAF’s proactive approach to gender issues, aligning with the increasing focus on gender within the military and responding to UN recommendations.



## ISSUE AREA 9: GENDER ROLES

Low

The gender roles cross-cutting issue area explores whether the prevalence of gender stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes influences the number of women deploying and their ability to meaningfully participate in peace operations. We assess this by looking at the degree to which women and men hold traditional roles and views about the roles that men and women play in society. We also assess the degree to which a gender protection norm exists in the institution. This means we assess whether men and women continue to feel that women need to be protected from danger even though they are military personnel.

Discriminatory attitudes and norms present further obstacles in achieving gender equality. According to the report of the UNDP Global Inequality Index (GII), Cambodia has a GII of 0.461 (2023) ranking 122nd out of 193 countries.<sup>46</sup> The unpaid work gender gap is still high, with women's unpaid work averaging 188 minutes per day, while men's unpaid work averages just 18 minutes per day.<sup>47</sup>

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

#### Opportunities

- Men and women both can serve as GFPs. Within the RCAF, 13% of respondents have served as GFPs, including 5% of men and 24% of women. Women are significantly more likely to serve as GFPs.
- Personnel believe men and women should take equal responsibility for various mission tasks. Participants believe that women and men should equally respond to a bomb situation (a heavily masculine activity) on a mission (average score of perceived competence for this task is 7.75 for women and 7.93 for men). Respondents also said that women and men have equal performance capability for drafting situation reports, engaging with refugees in a camp, training the local gendarmerie/police/military, and gathering information from the local population.
- Men and women serve equally in leadership roles, even after considering rank. 7% of the sample have served in one commanding position, including 7% of men and 7% of women.
- Men and women serve equally in combat and operational roles while on mission. 31% of all respondents (31% of women and 30% of men) engaged in operational activities daily while on mission. Yet, women were more likely to say that they had never engaged in combat/operations.
- Personnel believe all-female units are equally capable of carrying out important tasks while on mission. Respondents indicated that all-female units were equally capable of addressing SGBV in a country, contributing to peace and security, responding to refugees, and overseeing protests.
- Women and men's views about the current roles that men and women play in society do not really reflect traditional gender roles. The survey asked a battery of questions to measure people's beliefs about gender roles. The mean response was equal to the median value, meaning that the majority of respondents do not necessarily hold rigid beliefs about traditional gender roles.
- The RCAF does not impose any restrictions on women while serving in UN peacekeeping missions. Both men and women are subject to the same rules and regulations as well as codes of conduct of the RCAF and the UN mission.

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<sup>46</sup> UNDP, "Gender Inequality Index", Human Development Report, United Nations, accessed December 2023.

<sup>47</sup> UN Country Team, "Gender Equality Deep-Dive for Cambodia."

## Barriers

- There is strong evidence of the gendered protection norm in the RCAF. 96% of all survey respondents, (96% of men and 97% of women) believe that male soldiers should prioritize protecting female soldiers when they are in danger. According to the validation workshop, gender protection norms are related to the nature of the missions (type of operations, peacebuilding versus peacekeeping, security situation, nature of the mission) and the assessed risks related to female soldiers in terms of “heavy work” or “convenience”. Women are less likely to serve in combat and operational roles while on mission. Women (45%) were more likely than men (36%) to state that they have never engaged in operations activities.
- During a mission deployment, restrictions on mobility seem to be enforced across both male and female officers. The majority of deployed personnel (57% in total, including 64% of men and 46% of women) could not leave the base/compound whenever they wanted during deployment.
- Men and women deploy to the same missions, but women are significantly less likely to be deployed, with the exception of the UN mission in South Sudan. Based on 2023 statistics, and there is a notable gender gap within MINUSCA (11% women), MINUSMA (19% women), and UNIFIL (19% women). According to the validation workshop, this comes from the lack of available and qualified personnel. Women and men do not engage equally in extra work that is gendered while on mission. In addition to their regular professional duties, women (55%) were significantly more likely than men (39%) to cook meals. Alternatively, men (24%) were more likely than women (12%) to drive.
- Gendered expectations about women in a peacekeeping mission place them as caretakers and peacemakers. Participants rated a female peacekeeper (average of 8.13 out of 10) as more competent for engaging with women and children compared to their male counterparts (average of 7.51 out of 10). Additionally, 89% of respondents agreed that the presence of female UN peacekeepers improves the relationship between the host country’s government and civilians, whereas only 64% of respondents agreed that male peacekeepers do so.

## Recommendations

- Develop and implement comprehensive gender sensitivity training programmes, integrating them into the regular curriculum for all RCAF personnel. These programmes should address biases, promote understanding of diverse roles, and emphasize teamwork, skill proficiency, mutual support, and gender inclusivity.
- Review and revise human resources policies across all aspects of recruitment and promotion to remove structural barriers and ensure effective participation and equal opportunities for all personnel, regardless of gender.
- Develop specialized training programmes focused on professional development and leadership for women, aiming to improve their representation, advancement, proactiveness, and access to leadership positions within the RCAF.
- Implement rigorous gender training for leadership, covering issues like SGBV, gender mainstreaming, and sexual harassment prevention. Encourage leadership to promote gender equality and foster open communication on gender norms and stereotypes.
- Conduct a thorough review of the occupancy of positions to identify roles and jobs not currently held by women, and work to remove barriers to their participation.
- Investigate whether women’s underrepresentation in combat and operational roles is due to a lack of desire or opportunity. Develop initiatives, including targeted recruitment, specialized training, and mentorship, to support women interested in these roles.

- Communicate clearly about mobility restrictions during deployment, ensuring fairness and necessity. In cases of ambiguous policies, consider more flexibility for both male and female officers while maintaining security measures.
- Investigate and address factors contributing to the gender gap in deployments, implementing measures to ensure equal opportunities for women, especially in addressing any underlying gender biases.
- Develop policies and practices that promote an equal distribution of gendered tasks during missions. Encourage a collaborative approach to extra work and challenge gender stereotypes. Promote understanding that caregiving roles are not exclusive to women and encourage men's active participation in these tasks.

## Opportunities

### Men and women serve as Gender Focal Points

Within the RCAF, 13% of respondents have served as GFPs, including 5% of men and 24% of women. Women are significantly more likely to serve as GFPs. According to the interviews, these GFPs have been present in NPMEC since 2009 but “the challenge is that we are quite busy. However, until now, we never had any major problems. Within the deployed unit, the Military Liaison Officer will act as the focal point.” According to the validation workshop, this selection of focal points on gender mainstreaming, for example in the platoon, illustrates the gradual incorporation of gender mainstreaming within the RCAF. There is also the belief that these focal point roles should be expanded among key decision-makers. According to an interview with the Cambodian Military Advisor at UN HQ, New York City: “We need to have a kind of focal point in the Armed Forces, not only at the headquarter in Phnom Penh but also at the provincial level within the provincial military units. They will try to recruit more female officers to work in the combat roles, which will then create a network in the provinces, and then the number of female soldiers and officers will increase. It's not difficult for the national peacekeeping centre to recruit more female officers to participate in the UN mission. I think [the] focal point is very important.”

### Personnel believe men and women should take equal responsibility for various tasks.

In the survey, respondents were given different scenarios and asked to score male and female peacekeepers performing different tasks on a mission. Respondents were instructed: On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the least competent and 10 being the most competent, please rate how competent you believe the following peacekeeper would be in performing each task. Table 9.1 shows the average grade (calculated as the average of all responses that range from 1-10) for each peacekeeper in each task.

**Table 9.1: Rating male and female peacekeepers doing different tasks**

	Female Peacekeeper	Male Peacekeeper
Gathering information from the local population	7.96	7.75
Engaging with women and children in a conflict zone	8.13	7.51
Engaging with refugees in a camp	7.71	7.44
Training the local armed forces	7.77	7.73
Responding to a suspected terrorist attack	7.75	7.93
Typing reports	8.41	8.19

The average score for female and male peacekeepers is very close in each task, meaning on average respondents believe that female and male personnel perform similarly in each task. Respondents rate female peacekeepers higher for engaging with women and children in a conflict zone task. Interviews with elite RCAF personnel confirm these findings. They highlight that women play a central role in missions and that their participation is key given that women and children are disproportionately affected by the conflicts emerging in issue areas, “so women play a very important role in the UN peace missions to mediate with all this work [engaging children and women]. For instance, if encountering women on mission... customs, traditions and religion [of the host area], make it impossible for male personnel to do this work, therefore women really have a major role to contribute to the success of the UN peace operation.”

Personnel in the sample believe that women and men should equally respond to a bomb situation (a highly masculine task) in a mission (average score out of 10 is 7.75 for women’s perceived competence and 7.93 for men’s competence). This finding aligns with an interview with a decision-maker (at NPMEC HQ): “In the past, women were not daring to hold explosives, or touch landmines. Now, look at all the photos here from the peacekeeping school: women now can hold anti-personnel mines, can dispose of over 10 landmines per session in which there are all types of explosives, including 75mm, 80mm, 60mm, RPG7. They all have been disposed of by the women at the peacekeeping school with no fear at all. Before training they were scared of any risks occurring, but after the training they became aware of it, and are now able to do it.”

As for other tasks, personnel in the sample believed that on average, women and men perform similarly when it comes to typing situation reports in a mission (on average, women score 8.41 and men score 8.19). Furthermore, respondents believe that women and men should equally engage with refugees in a camp (on average, female peacekeepers score 7.71 and male peacekeepers score 7.44). Outstandingly, respondents rate female peacekeeper 7.77 and male respondent 7.73 for the task of training the local gendarmerie/police/military (a task that might be perceived as more masculine). Finally, respondents believe that women and men should equally engage in the task of gathering information from the local population (average of 7.96 for female and 7.75 for male peacekeepers).

### **Men and women serve equally in leadership roles, even after considering rank**

According to the FFF, men and women can serve in all roles and equally serve as leaders. Survey results also suggest that women and men serve equally in leadership positions. According to interviews, the Government requested that each of the four branches of the military identify qualified women who can serve at the leadership level in order to comply with UNSCR 1325. This resolution urges Member States to ensure 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. However, there are some concerns about women in leadership positions. For example, one interviewee stated, “If you are knowledgeable and an expert, most of the time there is no reluctance within the RCAF for the implementation, but sometimes men feel difficult to be subordinate. We heard from the back ‘this lady is emotional, stubborn’. But it depends also on your experience, because here in Cambodia, age is very important.”

86% of the sample had never served in a commanding position, (84% of men and 89% of women). 7% had served in one commanding position, (7% of men and 7% of women). 2% of the sample served in two commanding positions (3% of men and 1% of women). 2% of the sample reported serving in three commanding positions, (3% of men and 1% women). This is consistent with our finding above about few women in leadership positions.

### **Personnel believe all-female units are equally capable of carrying out important tasks**

Respondents were asked if they believe that all-female units would be equally capable as all-male units of handling certain situations. In Mali, peacekeepers are confronted with a high level of danger due to the ongoing conflict and instability in the region. Mali has experienced armed conflicts, extremist violence, and ethnic tensions, making it a challenging environment for peacekeeping operations. UN personnel in Mali often find themselves in direct combat situations, facing threats from various armed groups, including terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and affiliated militias.

For the Mali mission, 91% of respondents indicated that an all-female unit would be very prepared (65%) or somewhat prepared (27%) to address SGBV in the country. Similarly, when asked about deploying an all-female mission to Cyprus, 89% of respondents reported that women would be very prepared (54%) or somewhat prepared (34%) to address issues of SGBV. Testing suggests that there is no significant difference between perceptions of women’s capabilities if they are deployed to Cyprus or Mali – indicating that RCAF personnel perceive that all-women groups are equally prepared to address SGBV compared to all-male groups, regardless of mission.

94% of respondents asked about the Mali mission indicated that an all-women unit would be very prepared (58%) or somewhat prepared (35%) to contribute to peace and security compared to all-male groups. These results are similar for respondents who were asked about an all-female unit deployed to Cyprus: 90% of respondents believed that women would be very prepared (53%) or somewhat prepared (37%) to contribute to peace and security. Results from testing suggest that there is no significant difference in perceptions of women’s preparation for a Cyprus mission compared to a Mali mission, which means that these positive attitudes on women’s engagement with peace and security hold regardless of mission.

When asked about the readiness of an all-women’s unit to respond to refugees, 97% of respondents

believed that it would be very prepared (56%) or somewhat prepared (41%) to respond to refugees. In contrast, 92% of respondents believe that an all-female unit deployed to a mission in Cyprus would be very prepared (47%) or somewhat prepared (45%) to deal with refugees. This is a statistically significant difference, meaning that the level of women's perceived preparation is contingent on the mission. Nevertheless, there remains a high percentage of respondents (92%) who believe an all-women unit in Cyprus would be prepared for such a task.

With regard to overseeing a protest, there is no statistically significant difference between perceptions of women's preparation for this task between a Mali and Cyprus mission. For an all-female unit in Cyprus, 90% of respondents believed that women were very prepared (53%) or somewhat prepared (37%) to oversee protests. Concerning Mali, 96% of respondents believed women were very prepared (55%) or somewhat prepared (41%) to oversee protests.

While a mission to Mali would tend to operate in a significantly higher danger zone, compared to a more stable but politically complex situation in Cyprus, RCAF personnel perceive women to be prepared for the bulk of important tasks regardless of the level of danger in the mission responding to refugees as well as in the mission overseeing a protest. There was no significant difference between survey respondents' beliefs about the capability of all-female or all-male units, except for one scenario. This means that according to survey participants, women's participation in missions should not be contingent on the mission as they believe that women would perform equally well regardless of the mission.

### **Men and women's views about the roles that men and women play in society do not really reflect traditional gender roles**

The survey asked a battery of questions to elicit people's beliefs about gender roles. The mean response was equal to the median value, meaning that the majority of respondents do not necessarily hold rigid beliefs about traditional gender roles. There was also no difference between men's and women's responses to questions about traditional gender roles.

For example, officers were asked whether "a woman should ask permission from her father/husband before deploying on a UN peace operation." 73% of survey respondents (78% of all men and 66% of all women) in the sample believe that women do need to get permission from husbands/fathers to deploy on a mission. Similarly, officers were asked whether a "man should ask for permission from his mother/wife before deploying to a UN peace operation." 71% of respondents (72% of all men and 69% of all women) believed that men need to get permission from their wives/mothers to deploy. During the validation workshop, one of the female peacekeepers explained that her friends wondered why her parents had allowed her to deploy, "In my case, my father allowed me to deploy, but there's a certain over-protection of young women compared to men."

While the survey did not demonstrate that personnel held traditional beliefs about gender roles, there were instances of high ranking decision-makers holding traditional views, including strong evidence of a gendered protection norm. For example, in interviews leaders highlighted the challenges faced in certain mission areas, such as Mali, where the use of improvised explosive devices poses a significant threat to the safety and well-being of personnel. Similarly, in the Central African Republic, challenges such as sandstorms and limited water supply, (with as little as 2.5 litres available for drinking and showering per day), affect both men and women equally.

The validation workshop discussed gender protection norms and their relation to the nature of missions, including the type of operation (peacebuilding vs. peacekeeping), security situations, and risks specific to female soldiers. There is a prevailing notion that women are less experienced with hard skills like firearms usage compared to men. As it stands, there is a general perception that women may be more inclined towards ‘soft skills’ that require less physical strength compared to their male counterparts. However, it was acknowledged that women can perform hard skills but may face more challenges in doing so, depending on the context.

## **Main barriers**

### **There is strong evidence of the gendered protection norm**

A culture of gendered protection is one where personnel, particularly decision-makers, believe that women are not suited to engage in combat duties despite them being part of their duties as a soldier. Evidence of such views come out in statements that preclude women from engaging in more masculine, militarized tasks, such as combat.

The survey shows some evidence of this protection norm. Among the sample, 61% of respondents, (54% of men and 66% of women), agree with the statement: “Women are capable of special tactical operations.” Women were much more likely than men to believe that they are capable of special tactical operations. As a result, if men are more likely to make decisions, then they might exclude women from certain missions and tasks because of their stereotypes about women’s capabilities around protection. Furthermore, 96% of all survey respondents, (96% of men and 97% of women) believed that male soldiers should prioritize protecting female soldiers when they are in danger.

According to the FFF, women have been represented in all UN peace operations that Cambodia has deployed to except for a short mine clearance mission in Cyprus requested by UNIFIL leadership.

### **Protecting women from heavy lifting and ‘hard’ skills**

The interviews and validation workshop revealed a prevailing norm among key decision-makers regarding the roles and capabilities of women in the Armed Forces. One interviewee noted the challenge of having a limited number of female personnel, saying, “The challenge we face is the lack of female personnel in the forces. One more thing is related to the use of technical tools, as it requires a lot of energy. So we cannot let them handle heavy things like changing a vehicle’s wheels.” This perspective suggests an assumption about women’s physical capabilities, despite acknowledging their potential ability to perform such tasks.

The interviewee also pointed out a perceived gap in women’s experiences, stating, “They don’t have enough experience, mostly they are skilled in computer, office affairs, but have less field experience.” This comment reflects a stereotype that women’s skills are predominantly suited to administrative rather than field roles.

Another interview highlighted traditional stereotypes about women’s work, “As I mentioned earlier, women have to do their housework in the kitchen... It is difficult to change what has become the mindset.” This “mindset” is seen as a barrier to women’s broader participation in the Armed Forces, especially in field or unit-level roles. The interviewee observed that while many women are employed at HQ or the MoD, fewer are found in unit-level or provincial-level positions. This distribution reflects deeply ingrained perceptions about the roles and capabilities of women in the military.



The belief that women are generally weaker than men, a view held globally and not just in Cambodia, has been recognized as a challenge in the context of peacekeeping. This perception is deeply rooted in cultural and traditional norms, where typically women are associated with domestic roles and men with external work. One interviewee reflected, “We have to have special care for them as well, if compared to male peacekeepers. It is common sense the perception of people around the world, not only in Cambodia, that women are weaker than men.”

However, there is an increasing global awareness of the importance of women’s participation in peace and security. The diverse needs of the populations in peacekeeping mission environments – including men, women, and children – require a mixed-gender approach. As the interviewee noted, “So if we have women as well they can help to defuse the conflict, to de-escalate the conflict, to solve the problem.” This perspective underscores the value of having both men and women in peacekeeping forces to effectively interact with and address the needs of all people in the mission areas.

The validation workshop discussed the role of gender in various military functions, particularly in the engineering contingent. It was noted that men are often aligned with combat skills and heavy work due to their physical capabilities. The workshop highlighted, “For heavy work, men are more fit. Women cannot do certain things, even if sometimes they can do the same as men, but they need to receive proper training, for example in demining and EOD.” This indicates a belief in physical differences between genders, which may affect task allocation.

Additionally, the workshop addressed operational decisions related to long-distance travel and extended stays in the field. It was mentioned, “When it requires us to travel 300 km and to stay 10 nights we don’t send women with such a mission.” This reflects a cautious approach towards deploying women in certain demanding scenarios.

A female peacekeeper shared her experience of limitations she faced during her mission, “During my Military Observer mission, I was not allowed to carry heavy stuff or to drive.” This account further illustrates how perceptions of physical capability can influence the roles and responsibilities assigned to women in peacekeeping contexts.

### **Protecting women from insecurity on mission**

In another interview, an elite decision-maker indicated his cautious approach towards deploying women, considering their security and well-being. He stated, “I always want to send women outside but I have to think about the security situation. Does it fit the women or not? Is it safe for them? I consider all the women like they are our family, our daughters. So, I think a lot about which countries we should send women to and which countries we should not.”

This approach reflects a careful consideration of the deployment environments for female officers, weighing their safety against the mission requirements. The leader’s perspective suggests a protective stance, characteristic of a gender protection norm that is perceived to be prioritizing the well-being of female officers.

The validation workshop brought up discussions about the perceived differences in skill sets between male and female officers. It was noted that there are differing views on the strengths each gender brings to missions. The workshop also highlighted the need to better integrate and value the 'soft skills' that women typically bring to peacekeeping roles, and to explore how these skills can be effectively utilized in various mission contexts.

Senior leaders acknowledged several challenges to women's meaningful participation in peacekeeping missions, with safety and security concerns often mentioned as primary issues. For instance, one interviewee highlighted, "The first challenge is related to safety because there are many rebels whom we don't know in Africa and the patrol is required to go in the forest – even men are also scared to do it. But presently these issues have been much reduced and it's no longer a big challenge; we have trained in them the skills to negotiate, and many other skills, so women now have much knowledge." This comment indicates that while safety concerns exist, they are being addressed through training in skills such as negotiation.

Family-related issues were also noted as a challenge, with some families hesitant to allow their daughters to participate in missions despite their training in self-protection and negotiation. The interviewee observed, "Their parents still don't want them to go." Additionally, a perceived lack of openness or awareness among some women about what deployment is in practice and what it requires in the field was mentioned as a barrier to their participation.

Another leader pointed out the risks in certain mission areas, such as Mali, where the increased use of improvised explosives presents additional challenges, particularly for the EOD force that needs to be deployed to remote areas. These comments reflect the complexity of factors impacting women's participation in peacekeeping missions.

According to the FFF, women are allowed to serve in combat, combat-support, and combat service-support units in the RCAF. In UN peacekeeping missions, Cambodian women are deployed as individual soldier, team leader, HQ Officer, SO, MO, Deputy Contingent Commander and Contingent Commander. However, women were more likely to state that they have never engaged in operations activities (45% of women compared to 36% of men). This discrepancy is consistent with the data in Table 9.2, which suggests that there are still strong beliefs about gender roles among key decision-makers. These decision-makers decide whether and in what capacity women will deploy. The biases may affect the types of activities women are able to do on mission, including participating in operations and combat.

Among those who have participated in operational activities, men and women engaged in the activity at the same frequency. As shown in Table 9.2, 31% of all respondents (31% of women and 30% of men) engaged daily in operational activities during the most recent UN peace operation to which they were deployed.

**Table 9.2: Engagement in operational activities**

How often did you engage in operational activities during the MOST RECENT UN peace operation to which you were deployed?	Men	Women	Total
Every day	30%	31%	31%
Once a week	5%	3%	4%
Once every two-three weeks	9%	2%	6%
Once a month	6%	4%	6%
Once every few months	10%	7%	5%
Once during the deployment	3%	7%	9%
Never	36%	45%	40%

Given the strong presence of the gender protection norm within the RCAF, we recommend a multifaceted approach to challenge this bias. Firstly, the development and implementation of comprehensive gender sensitivity training programmes is critical. These programmes, integrated into the regular curriculum for all RCAF personnel, should focus on addressing biases, promoting an understanding of diverse roles, and emphasizing the importance of teamwork, skill proficiency, mutual support, and gender inclusivity.

Further, a detailed review of position occupancy is essential to identify roles and jobs not currently held by women, followed by concerted efforts to remove participation barriers. This step is critical in reshaping the gender dynamics across various roles. In parallel, there should be an investigation into the underrepresentation of women in combat and operational roles to discern if this situation stems from a lack of desire or opportunity. Based on these findings, targeted recruitment, specialized training, and mentorship programmes should be developed, aimed specifically at encouraging and supporting women in these roles.

Additionally, we recommend addressing the factors that contribute to the gender gap in deployments. This involves implementing and regularly adjusting measures to ensure equal opportunities for women, with a focus on countering underlying gender biases.

Finally, the development and enforcement of policies that advocate for an equal distribution of gendered tasks during missions are vital. This strategy should promote a collaborative environment, challenging existing gender stereotypes and emphasizing the non-exclusivity of caregiving roles to women. Encouraging active participation from men in these roles will further reinforce this balanced approach. Collectively, these recommendations aim to create an inclusive, equitable, and effective work environment for all personnel.

### Restrictions on mobility are enforced across both male and female officers

The majority of deployed personnel (57%, including 64% of men and 46% of women) could not leave the base/compound whenever they wanted during deployment. In general, UN peacekeepers are stationed in conflict areas, which inherently have high risks, therefore they must adhere to the guidelines and procedures on movement control issued by the mission. Survey results suggest that men reported higher levels of restrictions to their mobility on mission. 42% of respondents, (41% of men and 46% of women) did not have access to a vehicle whenever they wanted. While men have

reported facing mobility restrictions due to limited access to vehicles, it's noteworthy from Issue area 2 that women are generally less likely to possess driving skills. Consequently, when women do acquire these skills and become drivers, they might have better access to vehicles compared to some men. However, this also suggests that there are factors beyond vehicle access contributing to women's mobility challenges. These include the gender stereotypes previously mentioned, which could impact their overall mobility in different operational contexts.

We recommend prioritizing clear and effective communication regarding mobility restrictions during deployment to ensure they are both fair and necessary. In situations where policies are not well-defined, it's advisable to adopt a more flexible stance for both male and female officers. This approach will allow for adaptability within the framework of essential security measures, ensuring that the application of mobility restrictions is equitable and responsive to varying circumstances while upholding the safety and integrity of the operation.

### Men and women deploy to the same missions, but women are significantly less likely to be deployed

In general, men are deployed in higher numbers than women in UN peace operations. Notable exceptions include South Sudan, where 59% of the deployed personnel are women compared to 20% men, and Syria, where both genders have an equal deployment rate of 1%. However, in other missions like MINUSCA, MINUSMA, UNIFIL II, and UNMIS, there is a significant gender gap favouring men – in MINUSCA, 43% men compared to 11% women; MINUSMA, 57% men versus 31% women; UNIFIL II, 47% men against 35% women, and UNMIS, where 12% of the deployed are men compared to just 1% women. This trend suggests that men are more frequently deployed to missions perceived as dangerous, aligning with the gender protection norm. This observation contrasts with survey findings, where respondents indicated that all-women teams would be effective in any mission location, highlighting a discrepancy between perceived capabilities and actual deployment practices.

**Table 9.3: To which peace operations have you deployed?**

To which UN peace operations have you deployed? (n=247)	Men	Women	Total
MINUSCA: UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic	43%	11%	30%
MINUCAT: UN Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad	3%	0%	2%
MINUSMA: UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization in Mali	57%	31%	47%
UNIFIL: UN Interim Force in Lebanon	47%	35%	42%
UNMIS: UN Mission in Sudan	12%	1%	8%
UNMISS: UN Mission in South Sudan	20%	59%	35%
UNSMIS: UN Supervision Mission in Syria	1%	1%	1%
UNMHA: UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement	1%	0%	0%

A thorough review and revision of human resources policies are crucial, particularly in the areas of recruitment and promotion. The aim is to eliminate structural barriers and ensure that every member of the RCAF, regardless of gender, has equal opportunities for participation and advancement. Further, the establishment of specialized training programmes focused on professional development and leadership for women within the RCAF is vital. These programmes should be designed to improve the representation, advancement, and active involvement of women in leadership positions, contributing to a more diverse and effective leadership within the organization.

**Women and men do not engage equally in extra work that is gendered**

Men and women engage in extra tasks that are gendered while on mission. This is consistent with the findings from Issue area 2, which suggested that there are prior beliefs about the capabilities and skills of men and women that drive the activities they engage in while on mission. Per Table 9.4, men (24%) were much more likely than women (12%) to be involved in driving, while women were much more likely to be involved in cooking (55% of women compared to 39% of men) or translation (14% of women versus 9% of men). During the validation workshop, participants mentioned that most of the cooks are males.

**Table 9.4: While serving in ANY of the UN peace operations to which you were deployed, did you engage in ANY of the following activities in ADDITION to your regular tasks? Select all that apply**

Additional Task	Men	Women	Total
Cooking	39%	55%	45%
Cleaning	55%	56%	55%
Driving	24%	12%	19%
Translation	9%	14%	11%
Community outreach	9%	9%	9%
Healthcare provision	7%	8%	8%
Teaching local population	6%	5%	6%
Childcare	1%	0%	1%
Mentoring	12%	9%	11%
None	27%	25%	26%

**Gendered expectations about women place them as caretakers and peacemakers**

In the survey, respondents were asked to rate how competent a male (Dara) or female (Srey Mom) peacekeeper would be in performing different tasks on a mission on a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the lowest rate (least competent) and 10 being the highest (most competent). Respondents were instructed: On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the least competent and 10 being the most competent, please rate how competent you believe the following peacekeeper would be in performing each task.

Many personnel believe women should take responsibility for engaging with women and children. Taking the average rating for all respondents, participants rated the female peacekeeper (average of 8.13 out of 10)

as more competent to engage with women and children compared to their male counterparts (7.51 out of 10). Additionally, there is a statistically significant difference in perceptions about whether male and female peacekeepers should engage with women and children in a mission, which suggests that personnel believe men and women make gendered contributions. This could be explained by restrictive social norms and attitudes reinforcing traditional roles of women as caregivers instead of peacekeepers.

Again, this plays into the idea that women have particular gendered skills, such as conflict resolution. Respondents believed that women contribute to the improvement of a relationship between the host country's government and civilians more than their male counterparts. 89% of respondents agree that the presence of female UN peacekeepers improves the relationship between the host country's government and civilians. 64% of respondents believe men improve the relationship between the host country government and civilians.

An interview highlighted the significant impact of women's participation in peacekeeping missions. It was stated that, "Decisions are based on the confidence we put on women, and it is believed that when there are more women in the mission areas, it will also help to reduce violence." This conclusion is attributed to women's abilities in facilitation, negotiation, and their capacity to work directly with other women and children in mission areas, especially those vulnerable to war-related sexual abuses. The presence of women in these areas creates opportunities for more direct and effective engagement, particularly with those who may not be comfortable communicating with men.

Another interviewee emphasized the critical role women play in easing tensions, stating, "I think women are one part of the contribution and a driving force to participate in the mission as they really play an important role to help ease the tensions." They observed that in some situations, especially in confrontations, women's involvement is crucial for mediation and fostering better understanding, particularly in interactions with rebels. This perspective underlines the unique and valuable role that women can play in peacekeeping missions.

While arguments emphasizing the benefits of women in peacekeeping missions highlight their positive contributions, they also risk reinforcing stereotypes by assigning the roles of care work and peacemaking predominantly to women. This approach can sometimes be counterproductive, as it might lead to the perception that if women are not successful in peacemaking, their participation could be questioned. To avoid such implications, it's crucial to value caretaking and peacemaking skills across all personnel, regardless of gender. By distributing the responsibility for these roles more evenly, the emphasis shifts from gender-based expectations to a collective effort in peacekeeping endeavours.

Recommendations for the gendered division of labour are similar to the recommendations for the gender protection norm. We recommend implementing comprehensive gender training for military leadership, focusing on issues such as SGBV, gender mainstreaming, and sexual harassment prevention. This training should also encourage leaders to actively promote gender equality and foster open discussions about gender norms and stereotypes. Additionally, it's important to conduct a thorough investigation to identify and address the causes of the gender gap in deployments. This should involve ensuring equal opportunities for women and tackling gender biases. We also suggest formulating policies that support an equal distribution of tasks during missions and encourage a collaborative approach to additional responsibilities, thereby challenging traditional gender stereotypes. An important aspect of this is advocating for the involvement of men in caregiving roles, moving away from the notion that these responsibilities are solely women's domain.



## ISSUE AREA 10: SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Medium

The social exclusion issue area explores whether in-group /out-group mentalities cause women to be marginalized, ostracized, denigrated, harassed or attacked in their own institution, thus preventing them from deploying or participating meaningfully in peace operations. It also explores the ways in which male group cohesion forms. We assess this by looking at the levels of harassment and violence in the institutions and sanctions against them, as well as healthy and unhealthy ways of creating cohesion.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

#### Opportunities

- There are examples of positive bonding experiences and social cohesion in the institution. 96% of respondents, (97% of men and 96% of women), indicated that they socialize with other members of the Armed Forces outside of work.
- Personnel report experiences of positive bonding within the RCAF. 90% of survey respondents, (94% of men and 86% of women), suggest that there are co-ed sports teams. Of those who have identified co-ed sports teams, 72% have participated in the co-ed team, (78% of men and 63% of women). A majority of respondents have heard about sports activities (88%) and training exercises (89%) in the RCAF. Women were significantly less likely than men to know about RCAF sports activities (84% of women compared to 91% of men), training exercises (84% of women versus 94% of men), or extra physical activity (62% women and 70% men).
- Most personnel believe the RCAF is like a family (85% total, including 89% of men and 80% of women) and socialize together (93% total, including 95% of men and 91% of women), but women were less likely to say so.
- Joint (co-ed) training is widely accepted (95% confirmed) and men and women work together frequently. 75% of respondents, (68% of men and 85% of women), said they work with colleagues of the opposite sex on a daily basis.
- Personnel are willing to report misconduct at high rates and view misconduct as serious.
- LGBTQ+ issues did not come up during the research. The FFF indicates that personnel serve in the RCAF regardless of gender/sexual identity. While same-sex relationships are permitted, same-sex marriage is currently not legal.
- It is illegal to discriminate against women.
- There is a legal framework for addressing SEA.
- There is a national ombudsman.

#### Barriers

- Awareness of the RCAF's sexual harassment policy is limited. Only 58% of surveyed personnel were aware of the policy.
- There is no official whistle-blower policy or internal complaint system within the security institution.
- Personnel are worried about retaliation. 66% of personnel, (60% of men and 75% of women), reported that they are either very worried or worried of being accused of sexual harassment by a fellow officer. Additionally, one out of every four respondents avoids socializing with the opposite sex because they are worried about sexual harassment complaints.
- Most personnel (42% total, including 43% of men and 40% of women) were not aware that domestic violence is considered a disciplinary violation that could result in removal from the RCAF.
- Views about masculinity may lead to difficulties for women in the RCAF. Negative masculine

beliefs do exist, with men statistically significantly more likely to hold some negative masculine beliefs than women.

## Recommendations

- Implement mandatory training programmes for all personnel on the RCAF's sexual harassment and domestic violence policies. These trainings should emphasize the importance of reporting incidents and highlight protection mechanisms for whistle-blowers.
- Increase awareness of policies regarding sexual harassment and domestic violence through information campaigns and regular communication, underlining the legal and organizational importance of these issues.
- Formulate and enforce an official whistle-blower policy to provide clear guidance and protection for individuals reporting misconduct.
- Develop a zero-tolerance policy for inappropriate jokes and content within the RCAF. Implement effective punishment mechanisms for such behaviours.
- Enhance the implementation of existing punishment mechanisms and create a safe environment for personnel to report misconduct.
- Establish mechanisms to address concerns about retaliation, ensuring the protection of those who report harassment and communicating the consequences for retaliation.
- Establish comprehensive support systems, including counselling services and avenues for assistance, for victims of harassment. Ensure that victims can report incidents without fear of retribution to maintain a safe and transparent environment.
- Ensure that leaders within the RCAF actively promote and enforce policies against harassment, serving as role models for the organization.
- As discussed in previous recommendations, implement gender sensitivity and diversity training programmes to challenge and reshape negative masculine beliefs and stereotypes.

## Opportunities

### It is illegal to discriminate against women

Articles 44 and 45 of the 1993 Cambodian Constitution mandate the abolition of all forms of discrimination against women and affirm gender equality in all domains. Additionally, Article 49 emphasizes the duty of all Khmer citizens in national reconstruction and homeland defence. In line with these constitutional principles, Cambodia ratified the CEDAW in 1992 without reservations and adopted its Optional Protocol in 2010. This includes Article 8, which authorizes the CEDAW Committee to conduct confidential investigations into severe or systematic rights violations by State Parties.

At the national level, the Cambodian National Council For Women was established in 2001, focusing on gender issues and facilitating CEDAW implementation. Cambodia submitted progress reports to the CEDAW Committee in 2006, 2013, and 2019. During these reviews, based on Cambodia's reports and supplementary information from civil society, the Committee has the opportunity to pose preliminary questions, particularly regarding legislative and policy frameworks, discriminatory gender stereotypes, and women's participation in public life.

### There is a legal framework for addressing sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA)

The FFF also indicates that the RCAF has a legal framework for addressing SEA. Disciplinary actions range from written warning to dismissal from position and court martial. In peacekeeping missions, the punishment varies depending on the severity of the crime, in accordance with Cambodian laws and consideration of UN Military Police following a complete investigation.



Furthermore, and according to the FFF, at each send-off ceremony and similar event, the NPMEC Director-General and Government officials always remind all troops about the RCAF code of conduct and policy against SEA. Their remarks are typically broadcast on live TV or shared on social media. At the highest level of Government, Samdech Aka Moha Sena Padey Techo Hun Sen, Former Prime Minister of Cambodia, reaffirmed his support for a zero-tolerance policy against SEA.

There is training on this policy in the RCAF. According to an interview and the validation workshop, every contingent preparing for deployment receives a one-day class on human rights and sexual harassment delivered by the MoI, Military Prosecution Department, and Police General Commission, in addition to related lectures in the Core Pre-deployment Training Materials (CPTM). According to the same source, NPMEC has never had a case of SEA and each person has to sign an agreement saying s/he will comply with the rules before being recruited. According to the interview, the Department of Bilateral Cooperation and Legislation, a unit within NPMEC, manages the peacekeeping “contract” of all peacekeepers and is responsible in such a case. Any complaints about codes of conduct and violation of RCAF or UN rules laid out in the contract will be dealt with by this department.

This legal system is actively practised. According to the interview, the only RCAF case was a complaint filed with a Cambodian civil court in 2015 against a peacekeeper on mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Following the rules and regulations, RCAF decided to repatriate this peacekeeper, “It was a minor case but we took it seriously. The person is still in the army, but he is not anymore able to get deployed.” This can be a very positive indicator that the RCAF will be able to apply article 7 of UNSCR 2272 which urges all Member States “to take concrete steps aimed at preventing and combating impunity for sexual exploitation and abuse by members of United Nations peace operations.”

### **There is a national ombudsman**

The FFF indicates that there is an internal ombudsman. The national ombudsman office was established in 2017 by the National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development of the MoI to receive and process all citizen’s complaints. In the RCAF, the legislative oversight body is the Military Prosecution Department. This department works closely with the Military Court and Regulation Department of the MoD. The Integrity/oversight committee is the responsibility of the Personnel Department of the MoD.

However, among survey respondents, only 26% (23% of all women and 26% of all men) report the existence of a national ombudsman.

### **There are examples of positive bonding experiences and social cohesion in the institution**

96% of respondents, (97% of men and 96% of women), indicate that they socialize with other members of the Armed Forces outside of work. Yet, there is some variation among men and women with respect to how frequently they socialize with each other. 57% of respondents, (49% of men and 69% of women), indicated that they socialize with colleagues of the opposite sex every day. 14% of respondents, (16% of men and 11% of women) reported that they socialize with members of the opposite sex a few times a week. 17% of respondents, (18% of men and 16% of women), reported that personnel spend time engaging in adult entertainment such as bars and KTV (karaoke) together when not at work.

Many personnel participate in activities outside of work, which can foster social cohesion as long as the activities are not discriminatory. An example of a positive bonding experience includes playing

sports together. The FFF indicates that there are co-ed sports teams. Soccer, volleyball, marathon running, kick-boxing, and military obstacle courses are offered in the RCAF. Kick-boxing and soccer teams may compete with national clubs and schedules are arranged by their respective organizations. All these teams typically have tournaments every six months or annually.

Traditional events, including Khmer New Year and Water Festival, which include dancing and other performances, are held once a year. Social events, such as International Women’s Day on 8 March, are held annually. ASEAN events also include co-ed formal activities and exchange programmes that are held at least once a year. According to the FFF, women do traditional pairs dances with men during traditional events. To mark ASEAN events and other social occasions, women perform and present cultural exhibits and showcase their contributions to the RCAF and ASEAN.

90% of survey respondents, (94% of men and 86% of women), suggest that there are co-ed sports teams. Of those who have identified co-ed sports teams, 72% have participated in a co-ed team, (78% of men and 63% of women). 88% of respondents said they have heard about sport activities (91% of men and 84% of women). Women are significantly less likely to say they have heard about these co-ed teams compared to their male counterparts. Focus group participants also stated that women might be less likely to participate in sports. They thought that women may not have as much experience playing some sports as men.

Participants report that they have heard of other bonding activities as well. 89% said they know of training exercises (94% of men and 84% of women), 48% have heard about orientation programmes, and 42% have heard about co-ed formal activities.<sup>48</sup> However, women are systematically less likely to engage in those activities. Women in focus groups highlighted the importance of sharing culture and food together. They also travel to the cities as a way to bond with each other.

This means that while there are high levels of participation by personnel in positive bonding activities, particularly sports, women are still less likely to participate. This makes them less likely to feel that they are a part of a team and to think that they could miss out on “word of mouth” information.

**Table 10.1: Which activities in your institution have you heard about?**

<b>New recruits often get to know about bonding activities from fellow RCAF members. Please select all the activities that you have heard about in your institution.</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Sports</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>88%</b>
Non-athletic co-ed formal activities like prayer groups, choir, band [co-ed means that both women and men play on the same team.]	43%	42%	42%
Extra physical activity	70%	62%	46%
Training exercises	94%	84%	89%
Orientation programmes	50%	45%	48%
I am not aware of these types of bonding activities	1%	0%	1%

<sup>48</sup> Co-ed means that both women and men play on the same team.

On the other hand, according to the FFF, hazing or negative bonding experiences are very uncommon in the Armed Forces. The gender working group follows MoWA guidelines on protection against women and child abuse. There are also hotlines setup by the MoWA for complaints about women and girl's abuse of any kind. Recently, the MoI also set up a hotline to assist victims of non-consensual intimate image abuse and/or revenge porn.

### **Most personnel believe the RCAF is like a family and socialize together, but women were less likely to say so**

85% of respondents in the sample, (89% of men and 80% of women), believe the RCAF is like a family. Men were significantly more likely to say that the Armed Forces were like family compared to women. 66% of respondents, (72% of men and 60% of women) agree with the statement, "Most of my friends in the police/Armed Forces are in my unit." This indicates that men are significantly more likely to have friends within the unit than their female counterparts.

Additionally, 93% of respondents, (95% of men and 91% of women), believe that if they have trouble fulfilling a difficult task, other members of their unit will willingly help them. However men were significantly more likely to believe members of their unit will willingly help them compared to their female counterparts. This suggests that while levels of cohesion appear to be high, there are still differences between men's and women's experiences.

### **Joint trainings are widely accepted and men and women work together frequently**

According to the FFF, there are joint training sessions for men and women. 95% of respondents believe that mixed gender training is the appropriate way to conduct training in the RCAF. Furthermore, 75% of respondents, (68% of men and 85% of women), say that they work with colleagues of the opposite sex on a daily basis. Women are more likely to say that they work with members of the opposite sex.

Interviews support the notion that when women are given opportunities and comprehensive training, they demonstrate a strong willingness to participate and enhance their skills. An interviewee noted, "When deployed to peace missions, women actively seek opportunities to advance their skills and capacity. Upon returning, they continue their learning through various training courses offered by the NPMEC, enhancing both their skills and language proficiency." This dedication to self-improvement allows women to request deployments not just as contingent members but also as staff officers and observers, where they perform their duties on par with men.

The interviewee further emphasized, "I believe that when women are provided with opportunities, training, and chances to join in drills, they will be able to participate equally with men, regardless of the mission." This perspective highlights the importance of equipping women with the necessary tools and training, thereby enabling them to contribute effectively in various roles within peacekeeping missions.

### **Personnel are likely to report most forms of misconduct, and view misconduct as serious**

In peacekeeping operations, the RCAF relies on two main documents for addressing misconduct. These include the 2002 (April 15) sub-decree on RCAF general disciplines and the UN codes of conduct for peacekeepers, article 4 of which stipulates, "do not indulge in immoral acts of sexual, physical or psychological abuse or exploitation of the local population or the United Nations staff, especially women and children."<sup>49</sup> According to the interviews, "All peacekeepers are briefed on this code of conduct to make sure all of them understand the UN rules and regulation and the zero tolerance principle. While they are on a mission, these principles are reminded on a daily basis."

Personnel largely understand what constitutes misconduct and would report it, but numbers depend on the type of misconduct. When asked about a variety of hypothetical scenarios that can occur on peacekeeping missions, the majority of personnel said they would report their colleagues who had engaged in misconduct and viewed these behaviours as very serious or serious. For some scenarios, there was a notable number of respondents who would not report or who did not view misconduct as serious. In fact, these forms of misconduct are widely understood to be a violation of policy while on UN missions. Respondents answered as follows:

- 97% would report a colleague who drove drunk and hit someone with their car (98% of all men and 99% of all women). 100% believe driving drunk and hitting someone is serious or very serious). 97% knew this was a violation of official policy (98% of men and 97% of women).
- 96% would report a colleague who hit someone with a baton and permanently injured them (96% of men and 93% of women). 95% believe hitting someone with a baton and permanently injuring them is serious or very serious (97% of men and 93% of women). 99% knew this was a violation of official policy (99% of men and 98% of women).
- 98% would report a colleague for receiving cash in exchange for not reporting a crime (99% of men and 97% of women). 98% believe receiving cash for not reporting a crime is serious or very serious (99% of men and 97% of women). 99% knew this was a violation of official policy (99% of men and 98% of women).
- 93% would report a colleague for having a sexual relationship with a local boy, including 95% of men and 91% of women. 100% of respondents believe that having a relationship with a local boy is serious or very serious. 99% of respondents knew that this was a violation of official policy (100% of men and 98% of women).
- 100% believe that having a sexual relationship with a local girl is serious or very serious. 97% would report a colleague for having a sexual relationship with a local girl (98% of men and 95% of women). 100% of respondents knew that a sexual relationship with a local girl was a violation of official policy
- 89% believe refusing to patrol until receiving back pay is serious or very serious (89% of men and 89% of women). 93% would report a colleague for refusing to go on patrol until they received back pay (94% of men and 91% of women). 97% knew this was a violation of official policy (98% of men and 96% of women).

### **LGBTQ+ issues did not come up during the research**

The FFF also indicates that personnel serve in the organization regardless of their gender/sexual identity. Although sexual orientation and gender identity are not specifically recognized as grounds of discrimination, article 12 of the Cambodian Labour Law contains provisions on non-discrimination in employment, including on the grounds of sex. Same-sex relationships are permitted but same-sex marriage is currently not legal. Moreover, 6% of deployed personnel (5% of men and 6% of women) have heard jokes made about sexual orientation while deployed. 73% of all personnel, (78% of men and 66% of women) believe that marriage should be between a woman and man.

It is important to recognize that people may not feel comfortable reporting or talking about experiences related to their gender and sexual identity. These numbers are likely under-counts of the actual experience. Moreover, according to the FFF, men and women do not have joint barracks. There are also no unisex/gender neutral bathrooms, all are gendered. This means that there is still a culture that only recognizes gender binaries within the RCAF.

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<sup>49</sup> Ten rules code of personal conduct for Blue Helmets, [https://www.un.org/en/ethics/assets/pdfs/ten\\_rules.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/ethics/assets/pdfs/ten_rules.pdf).

## Main Barriers

### There is a lack of institutional readiness for complaints within the RCAF

According to the FFF, there is no official whistle-blower policy or internal complaint system within the security institution. The FFF states that there is an official witness protection law for anti-corruption, which was drafted by the Anti-Corruption Unit in 2017, but its current status is unknown. The anti-corruption law of 2010 and amendment in 2011 have no provisions on whistle-blower or witness protection. The RCAF handles sensitive internal reports of misconduct through the internal chain of command and the disciplinary committee in each unit. Moreover, while the FFF indicates that the disciplinary board's ruling cannot be overturned by commanders, the RCAF does not have a policy on conflict of interest.

Furthermore, the RCAF does not have an internal complaint system. According to the FFF, there are different paths to take depending on the type of internal complaint, but complaints are commonly submitted to the immediate superior, personnel office/department, gender unit, or disciplinary committee.

### Personnel are worried about retaliation

66% of personnel, including 60% of men and 75% of women, reported that they are either very worried or worried of being accused of sexual harassment by a fellow officer, as shown in Table 10.2. This might have an implication for cohesion in the sense that personnel might avoid socializing with the opposite sex because they are worried about being accused of sexual harassment.

In fact, when respondents were directly asked about whether they avoid socializing with the opposite sex because they are worried about sexual harassment complaints being filed against them, 25% of respondents, (28% of men and 24% of women), answered affirmatively. This means that one out of every four respondents avoids socializing with the opposite sex because they are worried about sexual harassment complaints.

**Table 10.2: How worried are you about being accused of sexual harassment?**

How worried are you of being accused of sexual harassment by a fellow soldier/ police officer?	Men	Women	Total
Very worried	55%	45%	32%
Worried	48%	52%	35%
Not at all worried	68%	32%	34%

Given the lack of institutional redress and concerns about retaliation among personnel, we recommend that the RCAF formulates and enforces an official whistle-blower policy to provide clear guidance and protection for individuals reporting misconduct. Additionally, we recommend the establishment of mechanisms to address concerns about retaliation, ensuring the protection of those who report harassment and communicating the consequences for retaliation.

### Awareness of the RCAF's sexual harassment policy is limited

According to the results of the FFF, the security institution does not have an official sexual harassment policy. However, the criminal codes (2009) and amendments in 2018 (Chapter 3 section 2) criminalize sexual harassment, imposing penalties of 6 days to 3 months imprisonment and fines of KHR 100,000 to 500,000 against offenders. The criminal codes and amendments define sexual harassment as an act when a person abuses the powers which is vested to him/her in his/her functions in order to put repeated pressure on others for sexual favours.

Validation workshop discussions highlighted the lack of cultural understanding of sexual abuse that can lead to sexual harassment. One participant explained, "RCAF always provides training about the sexual harassment to contingent prior to deployment. Both men and women familiarize with this based on long and short training." However, only 58% of surveyed personnel were aware of the official harassment policy, meaning that just slightly more than half of the surveyed personnel are aware of the policy. It is quite safe to assume that fewer would be aware of how it is being implemented. There is generally very limited awareness of formal sexual harassment policy in the RCAF.

Most personnel are unaware that domestic violence is considered a disciplinary violation that could result in removal from the RCAF

According to the FFF, domestic violence is regarded as a breach of disciplinary conduct, although the specifics of this are not clearly defined in the 2002 disciplinary punishment rulings. Survey results indicate that only 42% of respondents, (43% of men and 40% of women), are aware that being convicted of domestic violence in court could lead to dismissal from the RCAF under its disciplinary codes.

The validation workshop revealed that while the Armed Forces are trained in reporting cases of domestic violence, there is less clarity on how to effectively address these issues among personnel. Participants noted, "Most RCAF personnel know how to report the cases." However, when it comes to resolving gender-based violence (GBV), the approach varies depending on the role and duties within different units. For instance, the MP, having a defined role in such matters, are equipped to handle these cases. Conversely, units like those working on landmine clearance do not have a designated role in addressing GBV. Accordingly, those personnel not in the MP will report the issue to the MP for effective response. Moreover, even within a given MP troop, a leader is typically responsible for resolving issues, reducing the need for official intervention by the MP.

Given the lack of awareness surrounding sexual harassment and discrimination policies among personnel, we recommend the implementation of mandatory training programmes for all personnel, focusing on the organization's sexual harassment and domestic violence policies. These training sessions should underscore the significance of reporting such incidents and clearly explain the protection mechanisms available for whistle-blowers. Additionally, it is important to enhance awareness of these policies through informational campaigns and regular communication. These efforts should stress both the legal implications and the organizational commitment to addressing issues of sexual harassment and domestic violence. This dual approach will help in creating a safer and more informed workplace environment.

## Negative Experiences

With regard to experience on mission, 9% of deployed personnel in the sample (including 25% of men and 14% of women) have heard jokes being made about women while deployed. Women are significantly more likely to report having heard jokes about women while deployed. 6% of deployed personnel, (5% of men and 8% of women), have heard jokes made about physical appearance while deployed. Women are significantly more likely to have heard jokes made about their physical appearance. These results suggest that personnel on mission are statistically much more likely to report hearing jokes about gender and appearance compared to the RCAF institution as a whole.

Women are more likely to report instances of bragging about sex occurring in the institution compared to their male counterparts. 13% of respondents, (8% of men and 20% of women), say that members of the RCAF brag to their colleagues about having sex. 15% of respondents, (10% of men and 22% of women), report that personnel exchange videos/pictures of women with each other. This is a statistically significant difference, meaning that women are more likely to report instances of sharing videos/pictures occurring in the institution compared to their male counterparts.

These negative experiences can be mitigated by developing a zero-tolerance policy for inappropriate jokes and content within the RCAF. Additionally, we recommend that the RCAF enhances the implementation of existing punishment mechanisms and creates a safe environment for personnel to report misconduct. We also recommend establishing comprehensive support systems, including counselling services and avenues for assistance, for victims of harassment, and ensuring that victims can report incidents without fear of retribution, in order to maintain a safe and transparent environment.

## Views about masculinity may lead to difficulties for women engaging in the RCAF

Analysis of negative masculine beliefs and whether they dominate the culture of the organization suggest that overall, negative masculine beliefs exist, with men statistically significantly more likely to hold some negative masculine beliefs.

Men were more likely to hold traditional beliefs about men's behaviour. Men were significantly more likely to agree/strongly agree with the statements: "It is a man's duty to protect his family's dignity by watching over the purity and chastity of women in his family" (60% of men and 44% of women); "A man should be embarrassed if he cannot satisfy his wife sexually" (35% of men and 16% of women); and, "A man should have the final word about decisions in his home" (29% of men and 9% of women).

Though the rate of agreement by both men and women is very high, men were more likely to agree that, "A woman should remain a virgin before marriage" (71% of men and 64% of women).

Similar gender norms are also demonstrated by the fact that men (40%) were significantly more likely than women (24%) to agree with the statement, "Men make better political leaders than women and should be elected rather than women."

These social dynamics and misconduct can lead to negative masculine beliefs and need to be denounced and fought within the RCAF.

**Table 10.3: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement below. Percentages indicate the extent respondents AGREE or STRONGLY AGREE with the statement.**

	Men	Women	Total
Men make better political leaders than women and should be elected rather than women	40%	24%	33%
A woman should remain a virgin before her marriage	71%	64%	68%
A woman should tolerate violence to keep her family together	26%	11%	20%
A good wife should listen to her husband despite disagreeing with him	39%	16%	29%
It is acceptable to deploy a woman on a peace operation if she has a past history of strongly disciplining her husband	33%	33%	33%
It is acceptable to deploy a man on a peace operation if he has a past history of strongly disciplining his wife	24%	27%	25%
It is a man's duty to protect his family's dignity by watching over the purity and chastity of women in his family	60%	44%	53%
A man should be embarrassed if he cannot satisfy his wife sexually	35%	16%	27%
When women get raped it is because they dress promiscuously	20%	19%	20%
It is okay for a husband to have sex with his wife even if she does not want to have sex	16%	17%	16%
Women often lie about being raped	39%	40%	40%
A man should have the final word about decisions in his home	29%	9%	21%

As discussed in previous recommendations, the RCAF should implement gender sensitivity and diversity training programmes to challenge and reshape negative masculine beliefs and stereotypes.



## 4. CONCLUSIONS: RECOMMENDATIONS TO LEVERAGE OPPORTUNITIES AND OVERCOME BARRIERS

Results from this study show that the three main barriers to women’s meaningful participation in peace operations are 1) Deployment criteria (Issue area 2), Peacekeeping infrastructure (Issue area 5) and (3) Household constraints (Issue area 4).

There is some alignment in how personnel and key-decision makers view the top barriers to women’s meaningful participation. Across the board, personnel, decision-makers, and the MOWIP methodology indicated that women’s household obligations, as well as their need for more deployment skills, are a significant barrier preventing women from meaningfully participating in peace operations.

The empirical findings and some elite interviews also suggest that there are not enough eligible women in the Armed Forces (Issue area 1) and that negative experiences of deployed women (Issue area 6) are also key barriers to women’s participation in peacekeeping. This means that while the MOWIP methodology suggests prioritizing the challenges in Issue areas 2, 4, and 5, there is also a need to take seriously the challenges and recommendations in Issue areas 1 and 6.

**Table 10.4: Comparison across different data sources (MOWIP indicator scores, survey responses, and elite interviews)**

What do you think are the THREE main challenges to increasing WOMEN’S participation in UN peace operations in your country?	MOWIP Ranking (Indicator score based on survey and FFF)	n (%) stating this was a main challenge N = 438 (survey)	n (%) of MEN n = 249 (survey)	n (%) of WOMEN n = 189 (survey)	Mentions in interviews with elite stakeholders n = 10
There are not enough eligible women in the Armed Forces	7	126 (29%)	74 (30%)	52 (28%)	3
Many women don’t have the right skills required to deploy	1	217 (50%)	128 (51%)	89 (47%)	4
The selection process is not fair and/or is biased against women	6	93 (21%)	59 (24%)	34 (18%)	1
Women have too many obligations at home or with their families	3	245 (56%)	140 (56%)	105 (56%)	4
There are not adequate equipment and facilities for women in peace operations	2	75 (17%)	39 (16%)	36 (19%)	2
There are stories of women having negative experiences during deployment	4	133 (30%)	73 (29%)	60 (32%)	0
UN peace operation deployments aren’t helpful for career advancement	10	24 (5%)	14 (6%)	10 (5%)	0
Leadership or supervisors don’t support increasing women’s deployment	8	50 (11%)	29 (12%)	21 (11%)	0
Cultural attitudes make people doubt women’s ability to deploy	9	255 (58%)	138 (55%)	117 (62%)	2
Women are not treated as equal members of the Armed Forces	5	92 (21%)	49 (20%)	43 (23%)	0

### **Open Ended Questions from Survey**

Personnel surveyed in the survey stated that the most significant barriers for women's participation were cultural attitudes that make people doubt women's ability to deploy (58%) (Issue areas 9 and 10); women have too many home/familial obligations (56%) (Issue area 4); and the lack of relevant skills for deployment among women (50%) (Issue area 3). Again, this aligns with the MOWIP methodology's findings about Issue areas 3 and 4 and highlights the importance of changing attitudes among personnel in addition to the structural changes identified in Issue areas 3 and 4.

Personnel were also asked an open-ended question about the most significant barriers to women's participation. In line with the empirical results, selection criteria was a frequent answer. Other frequent issues were regarding "malaria, COVID-19," "personal safety," and "health conditions." These responses demonstrate the importance of improving women's experiences on mission and a need to focus on the challenges identified in Issue area 6.

Many personnel also mentioned facing problems related to weather and adjusting to the local climate. For example, one officer said that "shortage of water on mission" was a barrier, and multiple others mentioned "different terrain" and "environment."

Other open-ended responses included numerous comments regarding food, driving skills, weather conditions and climate change. Significant barriers for men included climate and weather concerns; lack of required skills; fear of safety and security; and concerns about selection criteria and selection processes.

In addition to these issues, multiple officers suggested that there is "gender inequity" and "culture" issues within the RCAF that prevent women from deploying.

### **Key Decision-makers**

A plurality of officers interviewed stated household constraints (Issue area 4) and deployment criteria (Issue area 3), with women lacking the required skills, as the main barriers to women's meaningful participation in peacekeeping. Officers suggested that there are not enough eligible women in the Armed Forces (Issue area 1).

The belief of key decision-makers that deployment skills and familial issues constitute a significant barrier parallel the reports of lower and middle rank personnel in the survey results. These comments from key decision-makers could also reflect an awareness of the skills-related and cultural barriers women face that may prevent their participation. Decision-makers' recognition of this problem is a positive first step in ameliorating the issue.

Yet, the key decision-maker interviews also shed light on the biases that might exist within leadership, as some of the interviewee responses included language that perpetuates the gender protection norm highlighted by Issue area 9. These comments are indications of the possible biases detected by survey respondents in the above-mentioned open ended responses. As such, there is a need to review the challenges and recommendations in Issue area 9, despite its positive score.

### **Best Practices to Share**

Cambodia, through its RCAF, has exhibited exemplary performance in several aspects of peacekeeping and gender integration, notably excelling in MOWIP Issue areas 7 (career value) and 8 (top-down

leadership). In Issue area 7, the RCAF has effectively highlighted the career value of UN peace operations deployments for career advancement. Issue area 8 demonstrates the support of RCAF's leadership and supervisors in increasing women's deployment, underlining the role of leadership in promoting gender inclusivity. Based on the RCAF's positive performance in these areas, the following best practices are recommended:

- Career advancement through peacekeeping: Emulate the RCAF's approach in highlighting career benefits of UN peacekeeping missions, effectively motivating personnel by demonstrating professional growth opportunities.
- Financial rewards for deployment: Follow the RCAF's example in offering financial incentives for peacekeeping deployment, enhancing the well-being of personnel and recognizing their contributions.
- Recognition and memorialization programmes: Adopt the RCAF's method of formally recognizing and memorializing peacekeepers, including Government and military acknowledgments, to honour their service.
- Mentorship and support systems: Implement RCAF-style robust mentorship programmes within the military, encouraging guidance and support for career development and personal matters.
- Promoting male allies for gender support: Create a supportive culture like that of the RCAF, where male personnel actively advocate for gender equality and support female colleagues.
- Awareness campaigns for gender mainstreaming: Increase awareness of gender mainstreaming policies among military personnel, following the RCAF's lead in ensuring widespread understanding and adoption.

These practices, inspired by the RCAF's successful implementation in the noted issue areas, offer effective strategies for other countries aiming to enhance their peacekeeping missions and foster gender equality within their Armed Forces.

### **Main recommendations to overcome the barriers**

The MOWIP assessment conducted for the RCAF identified three primary barriers to women's meaningful participation in peace operations. First, the assessment points to deployment criteria (Issue area 2), highlighting a significant gap in the necessary skills needed for deployment in peace operations and those possessed by women. This gap may stem from limited access to relevant training and experience or prevailing biases in defining the skills deemed essential for deployment. Secondly, the peacekeeping infrastructure (Issue area 5) barrier is characterized by inadequate equipment and facilities specifically designed for women in peace operations. This includes issues such as the unavailability of appropriate uniforms and equipment for women (such as sanitary items and custom equipment for accommodating shorter women in military vehicles), as well as insufficient accommodations or facilities for women on mission. Lastly, household constraints (Issue area 4) are identified as a major impediment, underscoring the challenge posed by women's personal obligations at home or with their families, especially related to social stigma. This challenge reflects the broader societal roles and expectations placed on women, which often clash with the demands of peacekeeping roles.

These barriers are supplemented by other challenges identified through the research related to Issue areas 1, 6, 9 and 10. For these barriers, eligible pool (Issue area 1) focuses on the concern of insufficient eligible women in the Armed Forces. Addressing this requires strategies to enhance the recruitment and retention of women, including targeted outreach and supportive policies that encourage their participation and long-term commitment. In peace operations experiences (Issue

area 6), the emphasis is on the negative experiences that women face during deployment. To tackle this, it's crucial to improve deployment conditions, establish robust support systems, and promote environments of respect and inclusivity. Gender roles (Issue area 9) deals with the cultural attitudes that question women's ability to deploy effectively. Combatting this involves launching awareness campaigns and training programmes to challenge these stereotypes and highlight the capabilities and value of women in various peacekeeping roles. Finally, social exclusion (Issue area 10) highlights the issue of women not being treated as equals within the Armed Forces. This can be addressed by revising existing policies and practices to ensure gender equality and fostering a culture of inclusivity that values all members, irrespective of gender.

Based on the identified barriers, the following recommendations can be prioritized to improve women's participation in peace operations:

**For eligible pool (Issue area 1):**

- Identify best practices and new pathways to improve recruitment drives and replicate these in future recruitment drives to increase the enlistment of capable women officers in the RCAF.
- Provide opportunities for staff to change department/platoon, and disseminate this information to women in existing units so they are aware of opportunities and encouraged to participate.

**For deployment criteria (Issue area 2):**

- Implement targeted training programmes to develop and recognize the diverse skills women bring to peace operations, including both 'hard' and 'soft' skills.
- Increase awareness campaigns and educational programmes about deployment requirements to ensure all personnel, regardless of gender, are adequately informed and prepared.
- Promote leadership and decision-making roles for women to challenge existing perceptions and showcase their capabilities.

**For household constraints (Issue area 4):**

- Establish official policies for and awareness of paternal, family, or elderly care leave, ensuring that both men and women can balance professional commitments with personal responsibilities without facing stigma or career setbacks.
- Create and enforce policies to reduce and address social stigma associated with women's deployment, facilitating a more inclusive and accepting environment.

**For peacekeeping infrastructure (Issue area 5):**

- Adapt training schedules and facilities to accommodate women's health needs, ensuring equal opportunities for participation and advancement.
- Upgrade mission facilities and equipment, including sleeping quarters, bathrooms, and office spaces and vehicles, to meet the needs of all personnel, with a focus on gender inclusivity.
- Ensure access to comprehensive healthcare services and needs, including reproductive and mental health care, and the availability of sanitary products. This also includes making female healthcare professionals available to address gender-specific health concerns.
- Design and provide uniforms that are suitable for female peacekeepers, considering fit, functionality, and cultural or religious sensitivities.
- Implementing these recommendations could significantly enhance the participation and effectiveness of women in peace operations, fostering a more inclusive and capable peacekeeping force.

**For peace operations experience (Issue area 6):**

- To effectively tackle sexual harassment and discrimination within UN peacekeeping missions, it is imperative to ensure comprehensive training and knowledge of these issues for all personnel. This should encompass handling situations of sexual harassment, integrated into pre-deployment, in-service, and deployment training programmes. The training should focus on identification, prevention, and response strategies.
- Alongside this, it is important to implement and enforce robust anti-harassment and discrimination policies, complete with clear, accessible reporting mechanisms to ensure accountability and promote a zero-tolerance culture. Additionally, all personnel must be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to respond to and prevent these issues, including training in cultural sensitivity, empathy, and appropriate intervention techniques, thereby fostering a respectful, inclusive, and safe environment for all peacekeepers.

**For gender roles (Issue area 9):**

- Develop specialized training programmes focused on professional development and leadership for women, aiming to improve their representation, advancement, proactiveness, and access to leadership positions within the RCAF.
- Implement rigorous gender training for leadership, covering issues like SGBV, gender mainstreaming, and sexual harassment prevention. Encourage leadership to promote gender equality and foster open communication on gender norms and stereotypes.

**For social exclusion (Issue area 10):**

- Resolving information problems in the RCAF: Increase awareness of policies regarding 1) sexual harassment 2) domestic violence 3) leave (i.e. paternity and maternity leave) through information campaigns and regular communication, underlining the legal and organizational importance of these issues.
- Formulate and enforce an official whistle-blower policy to provide clear guidance and protection for individuals reporting misconduct.
- Implement mandatory training programmes for all personnel on the RCAF's sexual harassment and domestic violence policies. These trainings should emphasize the importance of reporting incidents and highlight protection mechanisms for whistle-blowers.
- Addressing these barriers is crucial not only to uphold gender equality but also to enhance the overall effectiveness of peacekeeping missions. The inclusion of women, with their diverse perspectives and skills, is vital for the success and efficiency of such operations.

# ROYAL CAMBODIAN ARMED FORCES

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