

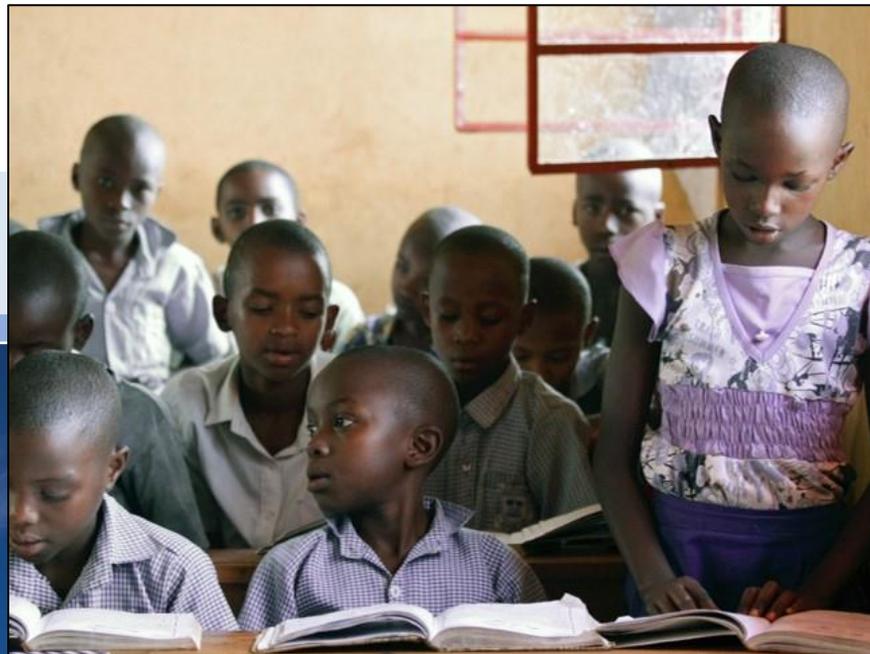


NSDS HUB

NATO STRATEGIC DIRECTION SOUTH

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NSD-S Hub Webinar “GENDER EQUALITY AND IN/STABILITY IN AFRICA”



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ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
GBV	Gender Based Violence
IO	International Organizations
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSD-S	NATO Strategic Direction– South HUB
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
TSI	Three Stones International
UNSCR	UN Security Council Resolution
WPS	Women Peace and Security

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Empowering women is not just the right thing to do, it’s the smart thing to do: it makes countries safer and more stable. NATO is determined to make a difference, including through our training and operations”. (NATO SG announcing Clare Hutchinson's appointment as Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security in 2018)

On February 28, 2019, the NATO Strategic Direction– South HUB (NSD-S) and Three Stones International held an online chat forum to discuss “Gender Equality and In/Stability in Africa”. During the daylong event, NSD-S Hub personnel engaged with 70 community and civil society participants, including individuals from communities, NGOs, think tanks, and academia, from 17 African countries (DRC, Uganda, Algeria, Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, S. Sudan, Sudan, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Liberia, Egypt, and Zimbabwe) and 8 non-African countries (Turkey, China, US, Ireland, Italy, Germany, Canada, and UK).

KEY RESULTS

Diverse and thoughtful inputs were provided by participants spanning six topics. The main outcome was gender equality is a process that needs to be continuously pushed forward in order to reach sustainable levels to support stability and security in Africa. However, this must be done in an inclusive way and with consideration for possible counterproductive effects. There were questions about NATO and gender policies, and what NATO is doing in this space.

The main points discussed by participants included:

- **To achieve gender equality, men need to be involved.** This is important to reduce Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and to train men, including boys, in gender equality. Without awareness from men, gender equality and women empowerment can result in even more violence.
- **Equal access to literacy and health is fundamental for future stability.** Women literacy translates to empowerment for all the community (children first) and improves economic and social situations.
- **Women leaders and women in decision-making positions think more about sustainable solutions for the well-being of the community.** Examples of best practices on countering violent extremism (CVE), peace mediation, climate change, and a participant mentioned an example from Libya on how women leaders have an impact.
- **UNSCR 1325 is considered important to lead the way but needs to be implemented on the ground, not just on paper.** There are currently no monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and not all countries have National Action Plans (NAP).
- **Increasing the number of female law enforcement personnel promotes prevention of GBV and staff needs to be trained on gender awareness and women’s rights.**

Awareness should be raised against GBV also in the communities and with local administrations.

- **Gender equality is a factor for more stability but not without nuances.** Gender equality should be strategically reached with gender equity and constitutions or laws supporting gender equality. They should be effectively applied and not remain on paper.

INTRODUCTION

“The treatment of women in any society is a barometer where we can detect other forms of oppression, and a rise in violence can be measured through the decrease of human rights and shrinking spaces for women’s voices We must recognize that violations of women’s rights and women’s political and economic isolation are indicators of potential conflict.”¹ (NATO’s SG Special Representative for WPS, Ms. Clare Hutchinson)

Gender inequality, and its consequences on peace, security and stability of communities, continues to be an issue for the African continent. Cultural traditions, structural discrimination, lack of gender parity² and high levels of Gender Based Violence (GBV) curb the enormous potential of women empowerment and gender equality across the continent. Notwithstanding bright examples from different countries on the continent³, Africans collectively still suffer from high levels of gender discrimination.⁴

Much research has demonstrated the key role that women can play, once empowered, to strengthen economies, societies and governments of the countries in which they live. Women’s active participation and contribution, and the removal of limitations which prevent their full participation, are therefore key to mitigating issues of instability across the continent of Africa. Since 2000, the UN has recognized the disproportionate impact conflict and post-conflict situations have on women and girls, as outlined in the UNSCR 1325⁵ on Women, Peace and Security (WPS).

In the last decades, the African Union (AU) has tried to improve the situation of women on the continent through a variety of approaches. First with the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) in 2004, followed by the adoption of UNSCR 1325 in 2010 and starting the same year the African women’s decade (with the theme: “Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment”) and finally opening a Women Gender and Development [division](#), followed by launching the Agenda 2063 which includes a gender perspective⁶ in 2013. The AU also created the Fund for African Women (FAW) in 2010, with the intention of directly supporting and enhancing women’s participation in the economic process, as well as increasing African women’s participation in economic decision-making.

¹ C. Hutchinson. (October 28, 2018). *Statement at the United Nations Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security by the NATO Secretary General’s Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security* [Transcript]. Retrieved from: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_159803.htm?selectedLocale=en

² Gender parity, different from gender equality, is a statistical measure about female-to-male ratio for variables such as income or education. Gender parity is a useful tool for assessing gender inequality in specific areas. UNESCO has a [Gender Parity Index](#) for [education](#) and [World Bank too](#).

³ South Africa for example has one of the highest gender parity rates in Africa for wage employment; Rwanda is the first and only country in the world where more than half of parliamentarians are female; and Namibian Constitution guarantees equality before the law and the right to non-discrimination on the basis of sex. See: “Empowering African women. An agenda for action”, African Gender Equality Index 2015, African Development Bank Group, 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/document/africa-gender-equality-index-2015-empowering-african-women-an-agenda-for-action-53123/>

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Among other things, the UNSCR 1325 stresses the high impact of armed conflict on women and recognizes their important role as contributors to sustainable peace and security. Retrieved from: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>

⁶ According to the AU Agenda 2063, all forms of violence and discrimination (social, economic, political) against women and girls will have been eliminated by 2063. Retrieved from: <https://au.int/en/agenda2063>

These were important steps. But it will continue to take time to realize the AU's aspirations as on the ground the situation is still problematic, with high gender inequality correlated with more instability on the continent.

According to the AU Commission, in the "Implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in Africa" of 2015, "it is only when we secure women - who make up more than half of the continent's population - holistically that we can start to realize this vision (of peace and security). There is still much to be done. The prevailing situation of women across the continent, including high levels of economic disenfranchisement, conflict-related and other forms of sexual and GBV, low levels of representation in public decision-making, poor access to justice and other remedies, continues to challenge the achievement of this vision."⁷

Therefore, the path is still long but the role of African governments, supported by the AU and other International Organizations (IOs), like the EU, UN and also NATO, is fundamental to continue on that path. As Sahlework Zewde, the president of AU Fem-Wise, recently said: "The international community should engage women's participation in resolving conflicts in Africa."⁸

It is increasingly important to listen to civil society and local communities as women's voices need to be heard at the government level across the continent. This was also the goal of this webinar e.g. bringing voices to the table.

The following sections are an example of progress from Rwanda and the analysis of the webinar, and suggestions for NATO activities and strategies to support gender equality and proposed recommendations for the future.

⁷ AU, "Implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in Africa" 2015, retrieved from: www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/pubs/2016womenpeacesecurity-auc.pdf

⁸ African Daily Voice, "Engage women to sustainably resolve Africa's conflicts, urges Ethiopian activist", 1/12/2018, retrieved from <https://africandailyvoice.com/en/2018/12/01/engage-women-to-sustainably-resolve-africas-conflicts-urges-ethiopian-activist/>

RWANDA: AN EXAMPLE OF PROGRESS AND DIFFICULTIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

“Women are more economically active in Africa – as farmers, workers and entrepreneurs – than anywhere else in the world. They are key to the welfare of their families and the life prospects of their children. They are an important voice in the governance of their communities and their nations. Yet they face an array of barriers that prevent them from playing these roles to their full potential. These barriers to women’s full participation are fundamentally unfair”⁹. (African Gender Equality Index, ADB, 2015)

The outlier for gender equality in Africa is Rwanda. According to the World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Gender Gap Report 2017 (an annual index that measures variables related to women economic participation and opportunity, education, political empowerment, and health and survival), Rwanda is ranked fourth in the world for gender equality. Rwanda is also recognized by the WEF as the first country in the world in terms of labor force participation, wage equality, primary and secondary school enrolment, and women's representation in parliament.¹⁰ The UN 2015 Gender Development Index ranks Rwanda 2nd globally with the lowest level of gender inequality, as measured by the Gender Inequality Index (GII) in sub-Saharan Africa. This global recognition and achievement resulted in the gender champion award to the President of Rwanda during the 2016 African Union (AU) Summit.

Currently, Rwanda leads Africa with respect to the highest representation of women in parliament, owing to a constitutional mandate requiring at least 30% of all decision-making positions in government to be filled by women.¹¹ This institutionalization of positive discrimination has resulted in Rwanda having the highest global percentage (64%) of women in parliament. In addition, 43% of Supreme Court judges are female and female membership of district advisory councils is between 43-52%.¹² Furthermore, Rwanda successfully met several of its MDG targets, including universal primary education, child and maternal mortality, HIV prevalence, and gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Even though gender equality has attained high importance on the Rwanda political agenda, it is a new concept that emerged after the 1994 genocide. Thus, patriarchal beliefs, attitudes and practices continue to characterize gender relations in Rwanda. There is resentment among many men who think that the Government of Rwanda has gone too far to support rights for women and are not committed to honouring new mandates. For example, the Rwanda Men’s Resource Centre (RWAMREC), which advocates for gender equality and promotion of positive masculinities, asserts that men in Rwanda often feel excluded from the dialogue on gender. For example, “participants of RWAMREC’s gender workshops have sometimes declared that the Rwandan President attributes more value to women than men, in the same way he values the environment above plastic bags and grass-thatched

⁹ African Gender Equality Index 2015, “Empowering African women. An agenda for action”, African Development Bank Group, 2015, p. 1.

¹⁰ Global Gender Gap Index 2017: Rwanda scorecard.

¹¹ Rwanda’s Constitution of 2003 with Amendments through 2015. Article 16.

¹² Government of Rwanda. 2017. From Victims to Leading Actors: Rwanda’s Gender Dividend.

houses.”¹³ It is thus not surprising that many men are resistant to the concept of gender and gender equality as they feel neglected from this dialogue.

With today’s conflicts and violence towards women in Africa still high in both number and complexity, it is fundamental to deeply understand the nexus between gender discrimination and inequality and national and regional instability. Empowering women means not only increasing the possibility of stability, but also allowing women to be agents of a new approach to security and projecting stability for the future of Africa. Rwanda’s leadership role in the AU could prove pivotal on the continent in regards to taking lessons learned and expanding to other countries.

WEBINAR PROCESS

To deepen the understanding of the situation of gender inequality and its relationship with in/security and in/stability in Africa, NSD-S Hub and Three Stones International hosted this forum to engage with civil society from different African countries and raise NATO internal understanding and awareness on the issue.

Six Theses drove the discussion under the Theme: Gender Equality & In/Stability in Africa.

1. Is gender equality an indicator of in/stability?
2. Has the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution [UNSCR 1325] on Women, Peace, and Security promoted women's leadership and participation at all decision making levels in Africa?
3. Does increasing the number of female law enforcement staff promote greater focus on prevention of violence against women, particularly domestic violence?
4. Are communities more secure when women serve in leadership and decision-making positions?
5. Is equal access to literacy and health for women fundamental for stability?
6. Does gender equality remain incomplete if men are not involved? Will engaging men reduce the power imbalance and violence against women to help increase stability?

The inputs from the participants were unfiltered and spontaneous, like in previous webinars, in order to maintain the authenticity and make a deeper analysis of the situation. With the aim of capturing the opinions of the contributors, the following section synthesizes and briefly analyses the impressions and points of view of the invited participants.

ANALYSIS OF DIALOGUE BY WEBINAR SUBTOPICS

Analysis is provided below for each of the dialogue’s topics. During the dialogue, participants were asked to comment on each of the six themes.

¹³ Katie Carlson and Shirley Randell (2013): Gender and development: Working Empowering women for gender equality.

“Quel que soit l’action entreprise, devrait prendre en compte la perspective du genre à travers la participation des femmes et la promotion de l’inclusion à tous les niveaux de la société ; politique, économique et de sécurité.”

Translation:

Whatever action is taken should take into account the gender perspective through the participation of women and the promotion of inclusion at all levels of society; political, economic and security. (Webinar participant)

THESIS 1: Gender equality is an indicator of Instability.

There was consensus among participants that gender equality is an indicator for more stability but not without nuances. Even if there is data that confirms that gender equality is correlated with more stability, gender equality should be strategically paired with gender equity. Likewise, constitutions or laws supporting gender equality should be effectively applied and not remain on paper, or worst used as a corruptive or threatening tool by men.

Participants mentioned that in order to increase gender equality, GBV must first be stopped. Harmful Traditional Practices, for example, are based on discriminatory views that legitimize various forms of violence against women (from Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) to early marriages and pregnancies, etc.). Other participants said that including women in society is not enough. Rather, there needs to be gender parity: they need to be included in the right places/sectors where there is deficiency of inclusion. Gender equality written into the constitution or even in law is not enough. The case of Tanzania was provided by a participant during the discussion, describing that the Tanzanian Constitution prohibits gender discrimination but yet country legislation has not been adjusted and judicial authorities often override statutory national law with customary laws.

It was noted by participants that gender equality for some leaders in Africa just means filling vacancies with women and is not creating more stability (women are often accommodated with corruption, because wives of fighters, leaders etc.). Plus, women's rights organizations and gender champion NGOs have been warned by government officials to reduce their activism activities and are now being more cautious to avoid punitive repercussions.

In Tanzania the advances in gender equality are being eroded with policy reversal and hostility towards women's rights and rights of LGBTQI activism (with ban on girls who get pregnant from attending school, arrest of LGBTQI activists, stopping of civil society organizations from awareness raising on family planning, etc. (Webinar participant)

Some participants said that instability is linked to structural discrimination or marginalization of specific groups (often ethnic or religious). Women in these groups are further discriminated. How we entangle this intersectionality and try to make a holistic approach to inclusion against discrimination is a real challenge.

THESIS 2: The implementation of UNSCR 1325 has promoted women's leadership and participation at all decision-making levels in Africa.

There was no consensus on this topic during the discussions because even if the AU has embedded UNSCR 1325 in its legal and policy instruments and created the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (Fem-wise) or 23 African countries have adopted National Action Plans (NAPs), many of these plans are not effectively implemented

"In addition to the (1325) resolution and support given to promote gender equality, there is still a lot to ensure that women and girls are not only provided with a safe, supportive environment in which they don't become victims of marginalization and abuse but also where they can heal and become empowered as active leaders and participate in the decision making." (Webinar participant)

or are already expired. To date, there are no concrete monitoring and evaluation processes. Thus, the outstanding question is to implement the UNSCR 1325 on the ground beyond having it on paper alone.

Participants stated that UNSCR 1325 was a good step to recognize the work done by women and to include them in peace and security work. It opened opportunities for women in Africa and women have begun to better know how to advocate for themselves and lobby for more equality and positioning in society. It also encouraged women to work hand-in-hand with men. Nevertheless, the lack of political will, influenced mainly by poor understanding, existing prejudices, stereotypes and cultures, continues to inhibit the Agenda for Women Peace and Security of the UNSCR 1325. Many of the NAPs are only on paper and not operationalized. Some participants mentioned that globally the role and effectiveness of NAP remains to be seen. Many first-generation plans lacked adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, repeating [UNSCR 1325's own flaws](#).

The perception from participants is that the greatest setback is general lack of awareness among the population. Greater efforts should be directed at education and enlightenment programs to create more awareness across populations. Awareness regarding the importance of gender equality and its benefits to peace and security in the society could help eradicate some negative practices.

THESIS 3: Increasing the number of female law enforcement staff promotes greater focus on prevention of violence against women, particularly domestic violence.

There was no consensus on this point. Some participants said that female law enforcement staff would be helpful to reduce GBV and Harmful Traditional Practices towards women, including FGM, early marriages and pregnancies, 'honor' based violence etc. as women would be more prone to denounce it.

Others said it is not enough as this staff would need gender sensitive training as being a woman does not automatically make someone aware of gender issues. Participants mentioned again a need for awareness for the entire community: leaders, men, youth, children and women.

But raising awareness against GBV should be done first in the communities and with local administrations. For domestic violence, some participants said more females as law enforcement staff would not necessarily improve the situation, as domestic violence is very strong in the culture. It would be better to have more resources for those who are being abused to pursue legal action or seek protection.

“Laws enforcement give women the legal ground to claim their rights and establish effective mechanisms ... But Increasing number of women in law enforcement staff is not enough to prevent violence against women, because the violence root is very strong: is in our culture. To prevent the violence against women we need awareness for the entire community.”(Webinar participant)

THESIS 4: Communities are more secure when women serve in leadership and decision-making positions.

There was consensus by participants that when women are in leadership, they think more about the well-being of the citizens and the community, and women's leadership is also less

corrupt. Examples of best practices have been given on CVE, Mediators beyond Borders, Green Belt Movement, and an example from Libya where women leaders had an important impact.

“...a recent partnership between two governments resulted to train thousands of Libyans in encountering terrorism across borders led by a leading Libyan woman. This is a real evidence that women in war-zones countries have the capabilities and experience to lead but the opportunities given to them is very limited, this is why there needs to be more pressure added by the international communities on governments which is done by US/UK in projects implemented by them in conflict zones.” (Webinar participant)

According to the participants, when women are in leadership positions, they think more holistically. If the purpose is to develop interpersonal relationships dedicated to common work on shared issues, women in positions of leadership and decision-making can secure the community. Conversely, one participant noted a need to be careful as sometimes women don't want to be led by other women. Thus, there was a caution of a need to make a balance between men and women leaders to give security to a community.

Someone noted that Rwanda provides a critical example regarding representation of females in decision-making positions. Rwandans have learnt

that the nation can heal better if inequality between genders is reduced. Someone else gave the example of Libya with a recent partnership between two governments (UK/US) resulted in training thousands of Libyans in countering terrorism across borders led by a leading Libyan woman. This was anecdotal evidence that women in war-torn countries have the capabilities and experience to lead. However, often the opportunities provided to them are limited, which is why there needs to be more pressure by the international community on this issue.

“Women should be adequately represented in leadership as they make critical decisions that would otherwise not be made by male counterparts. They think ahead and plan strategically. But rising to leadership is a challenge and privilege for women as they face several obstacles to participating in political life.” (Webinar participant)

THESIS 5: Equal access to literacy and health for women is fundamental for stability.

It was agreed by participants that equal access to literacy and health is fundamental for future stability, as women's literacy translates to empowerment for the whole community (children first), and improves economic and social situation. Also, equal access to health is paramount for women empowerment and stability.

“When you educate a woman, you educate a community. This implies that women play a very vital role in the development and stability of the society.” (Webinar participant)

Participants noted that women play a vital role in the development and stability of the society, as they transmit their learning to children, educate their daughters to participate economically and socially, train their sons to avoid violence and prevent conflict. Someone said that gender equality includes gender parity, and this is very essential to working towards stability in the educational sector in Africa. Someone else said that this should go hand-in-hand with increasing family awareness of the barriers adolescent girls face at home.

For example, an increased obligation to perform domestic chores that takes time and energy away from studying, attending and succeeding in school.

Some participants stated that access to health care is also fundamental to allowing women to play an active part in society, at cultural, economic, professional, and political levels, and this improves stability. With unequal access women are suffering from more diseases and unhealthy conditions, including malnutrition which affects children too, with a multiplier effect.

THESIS 6: Gender equality remains incomplete if men are not involved. Engaging men will reduce the power imbalance and violence against women to help increase stability.

There was consensus by participants that to achieve gender equality, men must be involved to reduce GBV and to train other men in gender equality. Without men raising their own awareness the gender equality and women empowerment efforts could result in more violence. Many participants mentioned that it is about time to educate men on the reality of the issues women face in order to increase awareness and reduce resistance to gender equality. They noted that if men are trained in gender equality, there's potential to support women in sharing roles beyond just political quotas or similar things.

Someone gave the example of Rwanda where some men, especially elderly men, are trained to be gender champions. This has potential to reverse cultural barriers and improve gender equality due to the high social status of elders in Rwandan society. One participant said that young boys should also be part of these dialogues to help them as well to grow up understanding the effect of imbalances in their respective communities.

*“Women need to find allies in men. It is not only educating women about their rights but also involving and educating men for this (gender equality) to be sustainable and more impactful”
(Webinar participant)*

One person mentioned a risk of instability through attempts to involve men in “gender equality.” She suggested better gender complementarity, as traditional cultures must be considered. Conversely, it was noted the concept of complementarity has always been used to maintain discrimination, in traditional discourses, especially religious ones. Therefore, exactly because of this, it is important to involve men in “gender equality” and “women empowerment” otherwise there could be even more violence.

NATO POLICIES AND ACTIONS ON GENDER PERSPECTIVE

NATO has several gender related policies and has previously carried out different actions to face gender challenges inside and outside the Alliance. In **1976**, NATO established a Committee on Women in the NATO Forces that developed [Guidance for NATO Gender Mainstreaming](#). Since **2007**, NATO Allies and partners adopted a [specific policy to support implementation of the UNSCR 1325](#) (and the other six resolutions that complemented it since 2000) in the framework of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) with [annual action plans](#) (last one in 2018). Also, since **2012** NATO has a Special Representative for Women Peace and Security (WPS), who serves as a high-level focal point for NATO's

contributions to the WPS agenda. The current WPS Special Representative is Ms. Clare Hutchinson.

During the **2014** Wales Summit, NATO acknowledged that the integration of gender perspectives throughout NATO's three essential core tasks (i.e. collective defense, crisis management and cooperative security) will contribute to a more modern, ready and responsive [NATO](#). In this sense, since **2017**, NATO integrated the UNSCR 1325 and gender perspective into the [NATO Command Structure](#).

The revised Policy and Action Plan on WPS that NATO adopted in **2018** sets ambitious goals for gender equality. It states specifically that "Gender perspectives will be integrated through NATO core tasks and functions in accordance with international and normative frameworks on WPS. This includes Deterrence and Defense efforts as well as Projecting Stability efforts through conflict prevention, crisis management and cooperative security, including partnerships and capacity building".¹⁴

All these actions have been very important in progressing the NATO gender mainstreaming and to face future challenges in gender equality both inside and outside NATO¹⁵.

¹⁴ In 2019 NATO is also extending the scope of gender equality to other areas as NATO DSG [said](#). What will be these areas is crucial to see which impact NATO can have on gender equality in Africa.

¹⁵ IMS MCM-0009-2015, Military Guidelines on the Prevention of, and Response to, Conflict-Related Sexual and Gender-Based Violence support these efforts.

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