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Implementing UNSC Resolution 1325 in Brazil:

surmounting challenges and
promoting equality

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Implementing UNSC Resolution 1325 in Brazil:

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Renata A. Giannini, Mariana Lima and Pérola Pereira¹

Summary

The United Nations High Level Panel on Peace Operations (HLP) called on member states to enhance their efforts to promote women in peace support operations. While elevated as a priority, there is comparatively limited empirical research about the involvement of female troops in peacekeeping missions. Women are still underrepresented in peace operations around the world. Less than 1 per cent of the 40,000 Brazilians deployed in United Nations peacekeeping missions since the mid-twentieth century were women. In the light of Brazil's recent announcement on the adoption of a National Action Plan (NAP) based on Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, this Strategic Note reviews the country's implementation efforts, particularly in relation to UN peacekeeping operations. Divided into three sections, the Note first analyzes the growing participation of women in the Brazilian Armed Forces. It then explores the challenges of incorporating a gender perspective into peacekeeping. The final section reviews how UNSCR 1325 is being adopted by the Ministry of Defense, including the creation of Gender Commission. Brazil has yet to elaborate its NAP to guide the implementation of the resolution. Nevertheless, some critical steps have already been taken towards the adoption of a gender perspective in peacekeeping.

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Introduction

Brazil has taken timid steps towards implementing United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) in its Armed Forces. To date, its efforts have focused primarily on increasing women's participation in the military, adopting measures to prevent and protect against sexual violence and promoting gender mainstreaming in peace operations. Notwithstanding Brazil's recent advances, the comparatively limited engagement of key governmental stakeholders – including those traditionally involved with gender equality and the defense sector – is slowing the pace of reform and modernization.

This Strategic Note analyzes Brazil's implementation of UNSCR 1325 over the past 15 years. It focuses on three crosscutting themes: (1) participation: policies designed to enhance the presence of women in the military; (2) protection: initiatives intended to protect civilians against sexual violence; (3) and prevention: actions mobilized to prevent sexual and gender-based violence through South-South cooperation. The paper examines existing policies, as well as past government programs and initiatives.

The Strategic Note argues that the comprehensive implementation of UNSCR 1325 is slowed by a limited whole-of-government approach in Brazil. This note finds that:

- Constructions of femininity and masculinity impose objective and subjective obstacles to the effective implementation of UNSCR 1325, especially in terms of improving levels of women's participation in the military;
- The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda generated pressure on Brazil, among other countries, to step up its efforts to reform the country's approach to peace support operations. The announcement that Brazil initiated the process to adopt its own NAP is a result of that;
- A range of reform efforts is underway by various public entities, especially the Ministry of Defense (MoD), the Ministry of External Relations (MRE), and the military. Notwithstanding some engagement with the Secretariat of Women's Policies (SPM), part of the new Ministry of Citizenry since a ministerial reform on October, 2nd, 2015, joined-up efforts were not translated into concrete actions and policies;
- The participation of military women in peace operations is likely to improve due to recent investment in enhancing their presence in military academies, traditionally male-only institutions;
- Women make up just 7 percent of the country's Armed Forces, most of them serving in administrative and medical positions.

- Women comprise less than 1 per cent of total Brazilian military personnel deployed in peace operations (of the 40,000 troops sent to Haiti over a period of 10 years, only 140 were women);² and
- There is substantive progress by Brazilian institutions in the areas of prevention and protection against sexual violence. These efforts are mostly undertaken by the military and through South-South cooperation initiatives coordinated by MRE.

This paper analyzes Brazil's experience in implementing the UN WPS agenda and proposes areas where improvement is needed. First, it offers a historical overview of women's participation in the Brazilian military and their primary challenges. Second, it highlights gender mainstreaming measures pursued by Brazilian troops in the field. The third section reviews recent policies directly associated with the implementation of UNSCR 1325. The paper concludes with a discussion of the remaining obstacles to its effective implementation in Brazil.

Women in the Brazilian military

The Brazilian Armed Forces have long-been a male-dominated institution. The incorporation of women into the forces gained important momentum in 2012 due to legislation requiring military schools to open their doors to women.³ Still, progress was slow in shifting the norms and practices of a centuries-long male military culture. The inclusion of women in the military is not only a principle of gender equality and an equal opportunity right, it improves operational effectiveness, such as in checkpoints, patrols, and collecting information from local population.

Women joined the Brazilian Armed Forces at different historical moments during the 1980s and 1990s. At the outset, women were invited to join the military as part of Brazil's democratic consolidation in the 1980s following several decades of dictatorship. The goal was to cultivate a less-violent and more robust image of the Brazilian democracy. Women were typically assigned to traditional roles, especially in administrative and health related posts, reinforcing stereotype of masculinity and femininity.⁴ Effective participation of women is still limited and does not include most combat positions.

² Ibid.

³ Law 12.705 /2012, allows women, from 2017 onwards, to join certain military schools that are otherwise still closed to them.

⁴ Almeida (2009).

Women were allowed to join the military in separate “all female” units. A good example of this are the “feminine auxiliary corps” which consisted of health and administrative personnel.⁵ The military branch that first opened its doors was the Navy in 1980, followed by the Air Force in 1982. It was only 10 years later, in 1992, that women were allowed to join the Army. And while junior and intermediate positions were made available, there was a lack of clear guidelines for the promotion of women through the military hierarchy.

From 1992 onwards, women were authorized to join several branches within the professional corps of the military. Today, women are allowed to join the Air Force military academy as quartermasters (1995) and aviators (2003), while in the Naval School they can pursue a career as quartermaster (2014). From 2017 onwards, they will also be allowed into the Army’s military academy as quartermasters and weapons specialists.⁶

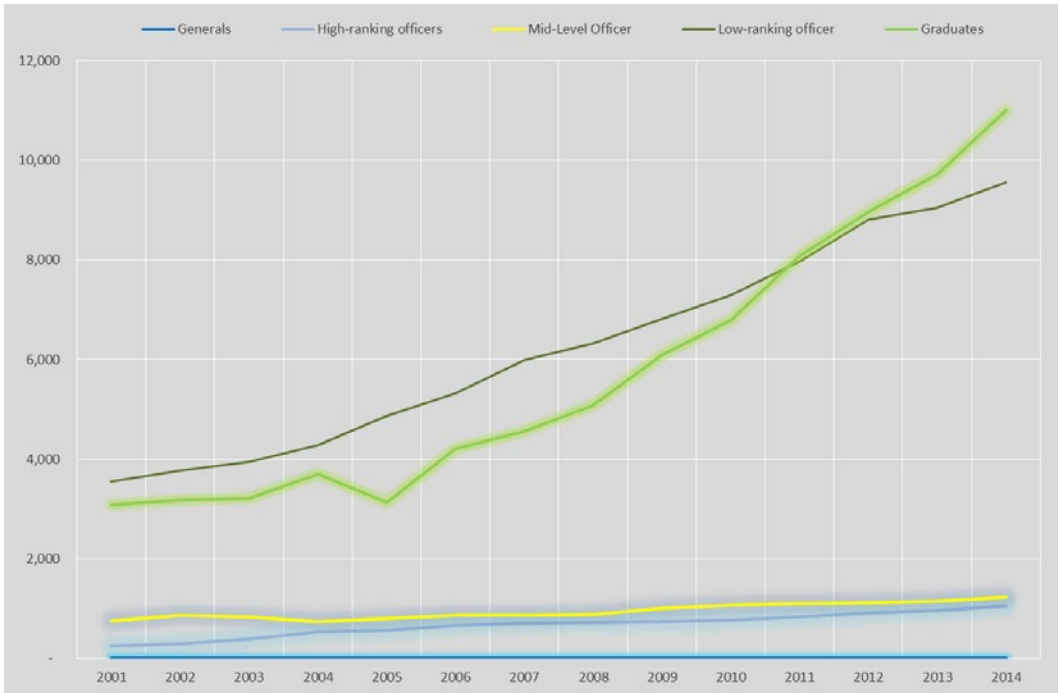
It is expected, however, that soon other combatant branches will be opened. The first batch of female quartermasters and weapons specialists will graduate from Agulhas Negras Military Academy (AMAN). The Academy also forms artillery, infantry, cavalry, communications and engineer specialists in combat. It is expected that over time, as the presence of women cadets increases, they will be allowed into the others as well.

In 2014, women made up 7 per cent of Brazil’s military personnel, a total of 23,787 female officers. They typically occupy technical, administrative and health-related roles – with the exception of quartermasters and aviators in the Air Force and quartermasters in the Navy. And while the Air Force maintains the smallest contingent in comparison to the other military branches, the Air Force leads in absolute numbers, with 9,927 women officers, followed by 6,700 in the Army and 5,815 in the Navy.⁷ These numbers are likely to increase significantly beginning in 2017 (and especially in the Army), when they will be allowed to join other branches.

5 There is an important and exceptional historical participation of women during World War II, when a considerable number of nurses voluntarily enlisted. These women received basic military training and were sent to support medical teams in European theaters.

6 Law 12.705 /2012.

7 See: Defesanet (2013). Retrieved from: <http://www.defesanet.com.br/defesa/noticia/9978/Mulheres-estao-cada-vez-mais-presentes-nas-Forcas-Armadas-brasileiras>>.

Figure 1. Number of women in the Brazilian military (2001-2014)

Source: Ministry of Defense (January 2014)

Most of the women in the Brazilian military are low-ranking officers, a fact largely attributable to their recent integration into the Armed Forces (Figure 1). Most female officers join the military from the professional corps (e.g. doctors, lawyers, translators). Many of them join with temporary commissions and must complete a series of training courses. Officers with permanent commissions are graduates of military academies (some of which are still closed to women). These differences in commission status have an important impact on career trajectory and promotions.⁸ A broader debate about the inclusion of women as non-commissioned officers is needed.

Exceptional cases of women reaching the upper echelons of the military hierarchy deserve to be highlighted. Dalva Mendes, a Navy doctor, was promoted to the rank of Admiral in 2012, paving the way for others to follow suit. Both the Air Force and the Army have women colonels, the highest rank achieved in these two branches to date.

⁸ Because Brazilian women are not allowed as non-commissioned officers, this is not considered in Figure 1.

Promoting gender equality in Brazil's engagement in peacekeeping operations

Gender equality refers to two core priorities regarding to peacekeeping: 1) gender balance – the ratio of military women to military men engaged in peacekeeping missions; and 2) gender mainstreaming –the increased concern with how peacekeeping interventions impact gender groups whether among the troops or communities in host nations. Brazil's gender mainstreaming actions have generated tangible impacts on the quality of Brazilian peacekeeping operations. Even so, the quantitative and qualitative participation of women falls short of ideal benchmarks.

The absence of Brazilian women in combat positions, particularly in the Army (the branch which sends the most troops into peacekeeping operations), means that comparatively few Brazilian military women are in the field. None are directly involved with protection efforts and women have extremely limited (if any) contact with the general population in host countries.

The first Brazilian military woman to participate in a UN peacekeeping mission was a doctor (with a rank of captain) deployed to Timor Leste in 2003. In the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), women began joining Brazilian troops on the ground in 2006. From 2006-2014, 124 women in the Army were deployed to Haiti (the large majority of them were dentists, nurses and translators).⁹

Of the 1,296 Brazilian troops deployed in peacekeeping missions as of 2015, only 15 (about 1 per cent) were women, all in Haiti.¹⁰ In the Lebanon, there was only one military woman since Brazil joined the mission in 2011. She was deployed in 2014 and was the sole woman naval officer in the entire contingent of 267 Brazilian troops based in the frigate stationed off the Lebanese coast. To date, there has only been one female Brazilian officer sent on a peacekeeping operation as a military observer. She was a naval officer deployed in 2013, and the case is a watershed moment for female participation in Brazilian peacekeeping missions.

These small but pioneering efforts could open the door for others. In other branches of the military, however, there are often limitations as to the rank and training

⁹ Ministry of Defense (2014).

¹⁰ See: UN Mission's Summary detailed by Country (2015). Retrieved from http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2015/jul15_3.pdf.

requirements for officers in order to join a UN mission as a military observer. Because of these stringent criteria, full participation as military observers is not an option for most female officers. Revisiting these criteria with female participation in mind should also be a priority.

Women in the Brazilian military have very limited contact with local populations due to their primary duty functions. According to UN resolutions, however, the presence of military women on the ground is not only a matter of gender equality and rights, but also an operational need. There are tasks ranging from monitoring checkpoints and search operations to interacting with victims of sexual and gender-based violence. The presence of uniformed women offers a different kind of role model to the wider population, demonstrating that women and men can pursue the same careers on equal footing, even vocations most closely associated with traditional male roles.

It is worth noting that Brazilian women have participated patrols in Haiti, albeit during stable conditions and at the discretion of specific commanders. Also, they have provided medical and dental services to the population during civil-military (CIMIC) activities in Bel Air, Cité Soleil, and IDP camps established on the outset of the 2010 earthquake.¹¹ However, health professionals sent on peacekeeping operations are almost exclusively dedicated to supporting their own personnel, remaining within the battalion. It is only when tasked with specific civil-military actions in the field that they have direct contact with the population. According to soldiers with experience in the field, these women have been instrumental in identifying potential victims of sexual and gender-based violence.¹²



Camp for the internally displaced in Port au Prince, Haiti. Photo Victoria Hazou UN/MINUSTAH

¹¹ Interviews carried out with BRABATT I and II commanders in 2012 showed a strong emphasis on CIMIC activities of this nature and the possibility of military women to interact with the local population while carrying out these tasks.

¹² Interviews carried out during fieldwork coordinated by the Latin America Defense and Security Network (RESDAL) in May 2011 and September 2012.

Brazilian troops in Haiti attempted to mainstream gender in battalion activities. There was, for example, a conscious effort to use local female translators on patrols and in the implementation of quick impact projects (QIPs) designed to empower women. Interventions coordinated by the Brazilians with MINUSTAH gender unit included lectures on safe practices during pregnancy, the use of condoms, breastfeeding and violence against women. These are important outreach efforts with the potential to lead to improved gender outcomes.¹³

Interviews with military women in the field indicate that personal perceptions of their overall role are very positive. Respondents emphasized how the presence of a woman “draws a lot of attention” from the host population and facilitates positive contact and the sharing of information when interacting with the public.¹⁴ What is more, female officers on the ground serve as positive role models to local women. Doctors and nurses participating in CIMIC activities also observed that the presence of women in the military was essential to effectively preventing and treating sexually transmitted diseases.

There was a noticeable shift in mainstreaming gender from 2011 and 2012 onward. This may be due to improvements in training on gender-related issues, or international pressure to implement UNSCR1325. To be sure, in the field, MINUSTAH’s Gender Unit had a significant impact in terms of encouraging Brazilian troops to think about the gender dynamics of peacekeeping operations in a way it had not done before. For example, after 2012, it was mandatory for all battalions and companies to appoint a gender focal point, who would then undergo a specific training.

In Brazil, recent changes carried out in preparation for the arrival of women in the military academies helped increase understanding on the operational needs and advantages of having women in the frontline. Taken together, these initiatives are helping to consolidate a positive historical memory on women’s presence in the military. More importantly, they may contribute to breaking the taboo on gender issues in the Armed Forces.



All-female Bangladeshi FPU contingent arrives at the airport of Port au Prince to help with the reconstruction in quake-devastated Haiti. Photo Marco Dormino

13 In several interviews, the subject of peacekeepers soliciting sex in exchange for protection or food was raised; officers believe that the presence of military women would curb this kind of behavior.

14 Interviews included troops from Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Peru and Uruguay.

Female officers across many nationalities emphasized that because of their limited numbers, they are constantly watched and judged. Most were not pleased with the added attention given by their male counterparts. Their dissatisfaction was not necessarily related to sexual harassment or abuse, but rather that they were constantly be held to a different standard than their male officer counterparts. For example, in one of the battalion visited the female officers complained about not being able to have male friends as others would insinuate they are dating. In another battalion, they claimed that all that attention often results in more rephension *vis a vis* their tasks.¹⁵

Lessons learned from these early gender-mainstreaming initiatives within the Brazilian battalion should be expanded and adopted as part of the battalion's standard operating procedure. After all, gender equality goes beyond just having a similar number of women and men in a unit; one must also dedicate resources and energy towards empowering women and addressing their specific needs.

Recent steps towards implementing Resolution 1325

In 2000, the UN Security Council approved Resolution 1325 that urges member states to promote women's participation in all peacebuilding, peacekeeping and peace support activities. UNSCR1325 is adamant that if peace is to be achieved, gender equality – meaning gender balance and gender mainstreaming – must be promoted. The UN stepped up its own efforts in this direction. For example, by creating a gender unit at the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and in field missions and by approving a series of resolutions on the WPS agenda. Nevertheless, the UN's success depends a lot on member states' willingness to enhance the agenda at home.

UNSCR1325 urges states to adopt NAPs as a ways of establishing a road map to implement the resolution and demonstrate commitment. Although Brazil is yet to elaborate and formally adopt a NAP based on UNSCR 1325, the country has developed initiatives across three main axes: participation of women in peace processes, protection of civilians against sexual violence in the field, prevention efforts on violence against women through South-South cooperation.¹⁶

¹⁵ Battalions from Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Peru and Uruguay were visited.

¹⁶ Miller, Pournik and Swaine (2014), p.2.

Participation

The low participation of Brazilian military women in peacekeeping operations is, in part, a function of the limited female presence in the country's military. In terms of public policy, however, Brazil has taken a few steps towards enhancing women's participation at different decision-making levels related to peacekeeping operations. If implemented, these policies are likely have a positive impact in rebalancing the country's gender roles in the field. In fact, increased participation of women in peacekeeping has been included in the government's Public Policy Four-Year Plan (the 2012-2015 PPA)¹⁷ and in the National Plan of Women's Policies (PNPM). The involvement of government bodies beyond the defense sector in this issue is key, but to be meaningful, it must reflect concrete practices.

The fact that enhanced participation of women in peacekeeping missions is addressed in national policy documents is in itself a great achievement, as it has not traditionally been included in the policy agenda. In fact, gender equality issues within the military are often considered taboo, and not subject to civilian oversight. The recent legislation granting women the right to enter Army military academies is also evidence of this important change.

Table 1 summarizes the key initiatives pursued under these policies. For example, the establishment of the Gender Commission in the MoD and the Gender and Race Steering Committee in the MRE reveals an increased priority ascribed to women's participation in both the defense and foreign policy arenas. These committees not only have the capacity and mandate to improve gender balance in key government structures; they could support the coordinated efforts to implement a NAP in Brazil.

¹⁷ The Plan is a mid-term governmental planning instrument, valid for four years. It establishes and elaborates public administration guidelines, goals and initiatives for the designated period.

Table 1. National policies and their impact on participation

POLICY INSTRUMENT	DIRECTIVES
2012-2015 PPA	Promote increased participation of women, both civilian and military, in peacekeeping operations.
2013-2015 PNPM	Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Secretariat of Women's Policies and the Ministry of Defense. It outlines four policy directives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the attributions already carried out by military women and map the skills that are necessary for carrying out remaining duties in peacekeeping activities; • Enhance peacekeepers' capacity and training on gender perspective; • Establish partnerships to prevent sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, and combat sexual violence as a weapon of war; and • Build strategies to combat gender-based violence in the context humanitarian crises (within protection efforts).

Source: 2012-2015 PPA; 2013-2015 PNPM.

Brazil supports UNSCR 1325 prescriptions in international and regional multilateral forums as well, particularly the open debates focusing on the WPS agenda in the Security Council. Another example is Brazil's active participation in UNASUR's South American Defense Council (CDS), which is presently conducting an assessment of the participation of women at all levels of the defense sector.¹⁸ The Council's Defense Center for Strategic Studies (CEED) is coordinating these efforts and is also planning a survey that will assess the day-to-day work environment of South American military women.¹⁹ CEED efforts will not only enable a better understanding of military women in a variety of national contexts; these initiatives will also provide additional data toward the elaboration of a common regional policy for greater participation of women in the defense sectors of South American countries.

¹⁸ The First South American Seminar for the Evaluation of Women Incorporation in Defense was held in November 2012.

¹⁹ The final report is scheduled for release at the end of 2015.

Protection

Brazilian troops involved in protection efforts in host nations – particularly in Haiti - developed gender-sensitive practices on the ground, as previously analyzed. These include foot and mobile patrols to deter threats, QIPs focused on empowering and benefiting local women, as well as the use of female translators to facilitate contact with potential victims of gender based violence.

In the wake of Haiti`s 2010 earthquake, several cases of sexual violence, especially in IDP camps, were reported. Although the earthquake was not the cause of sexual violence, it triggered its increase, and the issue hit media coverage around the world. Victims confronted considerable challenges to access medical services and even more to access justice.

Also, as part of a 2007-2008 QIP, a clinic specialized in the treatment of victims of sexual violence was created at the Brazilian base in Fort Liberté, Haiti. The clinic received and treated several victims of gender-based violence since then. In 2011, a UN Police commissariat (together with the Haitian Police) that specializes in sexual and gender-based violence was establishment at the same base. The objective is to facilitate victims access to justice as that is dependent on a medical certificate, often very difficult to obtain. It is claimed that the presence of the three institutions in the Brazilian base is an important step towards addressing this challenge.²⁰



Brazilian UN peacekeepers at the Haitian National Palace during a second day of heavy demonstrations in the capital.
UN Photo/Logan Abassi

20 Ending impunity or even receiving adequate medical attention, however, is still a challenge to victims of sexual violence in Haiti. See, for example: Kolbe and Muggah (2012). Retrieved from: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/09/opinion/sunday/haitis-silenced-victims.html?_r=1.

Excellence in training is put forth by Brazilian military as a central component to the country's UN peacekeeping efforts. Brazil's Peace Operations Joint Training Center (CCOPAB) is the institution responsible to "support the preparation of military, police and civilian personnel from Brazil and friendly nations for peace missions and humanitarian demining missions".²¹ The training center does not yet have a specific training module for gender related issues, with the exception of the UN's standard 45-minute training module (CPTM). But Brazilian troops are trained in overall protection of civilians, including those victims of sexual violence.

Gender-sensitive training may be an effective tool to improve protection efforts when it comes to sexual and gender based violence.²² It can also enable and improve discussions on the practical measures necessary to increase the participation and protection of women in the context of peacekeeping operations.²³ It can, if applied with fidelity and oversight, also enhance gender mainstreaming in actions conducted by peacekeepers in the field.²⁴ Hence, promoting specific gender modules to military training is likely to have an impact in the country's actions in this field.

The Military Prosecutor's Office is another important institution to consider with regard to gender-related issues in the military. According to one military prosecutor, troop discipline is critical: once a problem is identified, it must be quickly and effectively investigated so that Brazil's credibility and operational effectiveness are not undermined.²⁵ Although there are some cases of misconduct in Brazilian peacekeeping missions, overall feedback has been positive.

21 See CCOPAB (2015). Retrieved from <http://www.ccopab.eb.mil.br/index.php/en/ccopab/missao>.

22 The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), Department of Field Support (DFS) and the UN Women produced various training modules on protection efforts against sexual and gender based violence. Not only they provide basic understanding on the recurrence of sexual violence in conflict and post conflict settings, it also describes key actions that can be undertaken to prevent these from happening and how to address the problem in affected communities. See for example: UNIFEM, DPKO UNAction (2010). Retrieved from <http://www.endvawnow.org/en/tools/view/27-addressing-conflict-related-sexual-violence-an-analytical-inventory-of-peacekeeping-practice-2010.html>.

23 See for example: Peace Operation Training Institute (2012). Retrieved from http://cdn.peaceopstraining.org/course_promos/gender_perspectives/gender_perspectives_english.pdf. DPKO/DSF Gender Unit (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/DPKO-DFS-Gender-Strategy.pdf>.

24 The DPKO/DFS guidelines to integrate a gender perspective into the work of the UN military in peace operations, for example, lists a number of gender mainstreaming actions that should be carried out by all military contingents. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/dpko_dfs_gender_military_perspective.pdf.

25 See interview with military prosecutor Najla Palma on UN Radio. Retrieved from <http://www.onu.org.br/atuacao-do-ministerio-publico-militar-em-missoes-de-paz-da-onu-e-tema-de-oficina-no-rio/>.

Prevention

Brazil's prevention efforts are visible in key national policy documents, as well as in multilateral processes. The promotion of non-violent forms of conflict resolution and the need to address human rights violations in conflict situations is also codified in the National Constitution, the National Defense Strategy (2008; 2012) and in the Human Rights National Program (2010). Meanwhile, Brazil has sought to leverage approaches to improving gender equality in Africa and across Latin America and the Caribbean through multilateral and bilateral mechanisms, not least through South-South technical cooperation (transfer of social technologies).²⁶

The Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) are presently implementing two projects geared toward health professionals in Guinea Bissau and in Haiti. Another initiative in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is being implemented by the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights. These are important examples of South-South cooperation, and ones that do not necessarily follow the more conventional models of aid assistance among OECD countries. They are initiatives based on successful practices identified in Brazil and include police training, health service provision and legislative efforts.

Haiti

Established in 2002, this project is focused on improving coordination among health, justice and security services for victims of gender-based violence. In 2011 alone, at least 185 Haitian professionals were trained in health and public safety aimed specifically at curbing violence against women.

Guinea Bissau

The project "Strengthening and Technical Training of Health Care Institutions for Women and Adolescent Victims of Gender-based Violence and Health Promotion" has three main components: (i) health care for women and adolescents in situations of violence; (ii) youth mobilization and promotion of sexual and reproductive health for youth and adolescents; (iii) monitoring and evaluation.

Brazil's cooperation efforts with Guinea-Bissau were suspended in 2012, after a coup d'état. Internationally recognized presidential elections were held in May 2014; since then, Brazil has been assessing the possibility of resuming cooperation with the country.

²⁶ All projects are available at the Brazilian Cooperation Agency Database. Available at: <http://www.abc.gov.br/Projetos/pesquisa>.

Democratic Republic of Congo

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is working to strengthen the response to sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) by: (i) improving coordination among the multiple initiatives addressing sexual violence in DRC; (ii) increasing access to reparations and other remedies for victims of sexual violence; and (iii) increasing access to justice for victims of sexual violence, through improved reporting, judicial investigation, prosecution and enforcement in cases of sexual violence. Through Brazilian financial support (US\$ 1 million in February 2011), this project aims to support the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) in DRC in the area of sexual violence and in line with OHCHR's thematic priorities.

In a nutshell, Brazil has taken a few steps to promote the WPS agenda and implement key aspects of UNSCR 1325. Gender mainstreaming is becoming standard practice for Brazilian troops and women's participation in peacekeeping is likely to rise. Brazil has endorsed international efforts to end war crimes and mass atrocities – including sexual violence²⁷ – and has pronounced itself as a pro gender equality country in international fora, especially at the United Nations.²⁸

All these efforts success is dependent on an improved status of the issue within MoD and an increased involvement of other government bodies, such as the Secretariat of Women's Policies or the Presidency. A NAP would establish key steps towards the implementation of the WPS agenda. Nonetheless, it is key that it is inclusive and that a more powerful body within the Ministry takes the issue forward.

As of the writing of this paper, the Gender Commission had consultative status without the power to mandate policies. It became clear, however, that since its creation and the several debates that took place in its routine meetings, a more educated perspective on the agenda has risen. It is possible the consultative process on the possibility of establishing a NAP contributed to bolster the agenda by just provoking the Ministry's employees to think and talk about the issue.

²⁷ Sexual violence in conflict is recognized a crime against humanity. Brazil as a signatory of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court recognizes the Court's mandate. The country has also repeatedly recognized sexual violence in conflict as a threat to international peace during the WPS debates at the Security Council. See, for example: Fight against Sexual Violence in Conflict Reaches 'New Juncture', Security Council Told. Retrieved September 15, 2015, from <http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc11862.doc.htm>.

²⁸ Brazilian foreign policy, however, was not a priority during the first and second terms of President Dilma Rousseff. The government's concern were focused on the negative prospects of Brazilian economy and multiple corruption scandals. Budget cuts to the Ministry of External Relations affected the UN payment dues and Brazilian cooperation and many projects were either closed or decreased. See: Muggah (2015). Retrieved September 15, 2015, from <https://www.opendemocracy.net/robert-muggah/brazil%C2%B4s-foreign-policy-is-in-dark>.

The limited engagement from other government institutions on this issue brings extra challenges. Indeed, the federal government has already approved and implemented three iterations of the Brazilian National Plan of Policies for Women,²⁹ a broad document that guides Brazilian policies in a cross-cutting way that includes all ministries and sectors. A key shortcoming of the Plan is that it lacks significant measures dealing specifically with peace, security and women in peacekeeping efforts. Its focus is economic empowerment and combatting domestic violence, but tends to prioritize domestic over international policies. This is something a NAP can address.

The Brazilian MoD is at an important crossroads in the gender inclusion debate. The creation of a Gender Commission, robust and specific strategic documents and institutional partnerships are crucial to this process, as well as enlisting key individuals as champions. Important challenges remain, however, such as the fact that the Commission is comprised of members with little influence within the Ministry, as well as a few retired military officers who are either resistant to gender inclusion or think that gender equality has already been achieved in the military and the MoD. This is yet another evidence of the incipient political harness that the Commission holds within the Ministry. A top-down directive coming from a NAP and from the Minister himself, or from the Presidency, or the Women's Secretariat could support overcoming these challenges.

Conclusions: challenges ahead

Brazil has taken a few steps towards the implementation of UNSCR 1325. There is a pervasive construction of masculinity as connected to force and its use – even more so within patriarchal institutions such as the military. In Brazil, this perspective has justified the restriction of women from the Armed Forces. There are many who believe that increased female presence would adversely impact Brazilian troops capacity and operational effectiveness. The number one challenge to implement UNSCR 1325, then, is the construction of masculinity itself within the Brazilian society.

Addressing this challenge requires sustained cultural and organizational change, not only in the military but more broadly in the wider public. What Brazil requires is a re-framing of women's role in society so that women see themselves as a fundamental part of peace and security processes and key participants in the country's defense sector. On the other hand, more men must recognize the importance of including women in order to achieve sustainable peace and representative defense policies.

29 PNPM I (2004-2007); PNPM II (2008-2011); PNPM III (2013-2015). Retrieved September 22 2015, from <http://www.observatoriodegenero.gov.br/eixo/politicas-publicas/pnpm>.

Logistical and technical challenges lie ahead. For example, increased participation of women will require consideration of the infrastructure changes that will be necessary in military schools and naval vessels. The common excuse that “there are no female restrooms” when referring to difficulties may seem trite, it is also true that these structural changes will be costly and require longtime planning. In Brazil, as elsewhere, these types of normative changes are critical to enabling a process through which longer-term cultural and structural changes can occur.

The low participation of Brazilian female officers in peacekeeping operations is a direct consequence of a lack of promotion of women to the highest ranks, as well as limited entry to traditional schools of the Forces but mainly the Army, including the combat branches. At the same time, Brazil has no tradition of contributing to peacekeeping missions with civilian personnel, which reduces women’s participation in international peace and security processes. The country needs to pursue a dual strategy of accelerating the process to obtain equal access for both men and women to the combatant branches at the highest levels within the military while promoting civilian participation in peacekeeping.

Brazil is at a critical juncture when it comes to the WPS agenda. While there is limited debate on the subject in parliament or the media, some key actors such as the MoD, MRE, and CCOPAB are rethinking their assumptions and rewriting their strategies. The work of civil society groups such as the Igarapé Institute and the Pandiá Calógeras Institute, as well as international organizations such as UN Women, is key to driving the agenda. For the agenda to evolve, it is critical that the debate not be limited to top decision-makers from the defense sector. The WPS agenda must become progressively independent as a foreign and defense policy priority and involve other relevant national actors to ensure more sustainable international peace. The process of elaboration and adoption of a NAP will be a key opportunity.

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