

Sustaining Effective UN Peace Operations in the Future: Insights from the Studies Undertaken by the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON)

A. Introduction¹

From 2018–2025, the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON)—a network of more than 40 research institutions and think tanks—undertook joint research studies into the effectiveness of specific peace operations and/or thematic mandate areas. A total of 20 reports were published: 12 covering UN peace operations in Abyei, CAR, Cyprus, DRC, the Middle East, Mali, South Sudan and Sudan; four thematic studies on Human Rights, Mis-/Dis-/Mal-information and Hate Speech, Protection of Civilians, and Women, Peace and Security; and four reviewing non-UN missions (G5, MNJTF, Mozambique/SAMIN and Somalia/AMISOM).

While UN peace operations must adapt to rising global challenges, intensifying geopolitical polarisation, reduced funding and rapid reconfiguration of the world order, learning from past efforts remains essential for ensuring future effectiveness. In this report, we have synthesised meta-level insights based on the combined findings of 16 EPON studies of UN peace operations and thematic studies. The overarching question for this analysis is: what are the key factors that influence the effectiveness and success of peace operations?

We have used artificial intelligence (AI) tools to summarise the findings of the EPON reports and we have edited and added our own analysis. AI also suggested examples that support the various findings. We have aimed to produce a very brief policy-oriented report. Clearly, contexts, relationships, and measures are always more complex than can be captured in a short concise finding, but they give an indication of what has been tried, what has worked, and what has been challenging. Not surprisingly, given their prominence over the last decade a significant share of the examples emerges from the four major mission contexts of the last ten years: MINUSCA, MINUSMA, MONUSCO and UNMISS. However, we have referred to other peace operations where relevant. While only one special political mission (UNITAMS) has been reviewed by EPON to date, an additional open-source AI query was carried out to flesh out the findings that pertain to special political missions.

B. Evolving Peace and Security Context

Context and Challenges

Multipolar tensions limiting unity. The era of coherent multilateral, multinational and multidimensional peace operations (e.g., East Timor, Sierra Leone) is waning, with only a few multidimensional missions remaining in CAR, DRC and South Sudan. Geopolitical rivalry—especially between the U.S., China, and Russia—has resulted in UN Security Council deadlock, hindering coherent action. While a Special Political Mission was launched in Sudan (UNITAMS) in 2020, no new peacekeeping operations have been

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authorised since 2014, and several have withdrawn due to host state consent withdrawal. UNITAMS, too, was forced to close in 2023.

Conflict trends and emerging risks. Civil wars have surged (28% increase over the last decade), with conflicts now more numerous, deadly and complex. New emerging risks including cyber warfare, malicious use of AI (e.g. automated weapons systems), climate-induced conflicts, and pandemics, raise questions about the continued relevance of existing peace operations models.

Middle Powers Reshape Mediation Spaces and Political Influence. Diplomatic and political engagements by regional actors increasingly either cooperate or compete with UN-led mediation processes. **Example:** Turkey and Qatar have shaped dialogue tracks in the DRC, Libya and Somalia, directly impacting the efforts of the Offices of the Special Envoys for the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa, MONUSCO, UNSMIL and UNSOM; Saudi Arabia's initiatives in Yemen similarly affect the work of UNMHA.

Institutional strain. The UN grapples with financial challenges due to large contributors withholding and delaying payments, bureaucratic inefficiencies from Member State-devised rules, and financial micro-management by Member States that limits swift response and hinders adaptation.

Recommendations to Increase Relevance and Resilience:

- Adapt the types of support and responses peace operations offer to address new emerging risks as well as the evolving geopolitical context. This could include:
 - Specialised civilian, police and military expert teams that can provide tailored responses to specific needs;
 - The capability to design and deploy a range of modular mission options depending on identified needs;
 - Addressing persistent challenges, such as issues of coordination, leadership, political buy-in and conceptual cohesion, in order to enhance partnership arrangements with regional organisations and other institutions that can complement what the UN can offer, for instance by providing peace enforcement operations and
 - Assessment and planning capabilities that enable peace operations to continuously adapt to changing circumstances in order to remain effective in achieving mandated tasks.
- Reinforce political primacy by ensuring missions support and are supported by diplomacy, mediation and conflict prevention efforts. This implies enhanced and sustained coordination between missions, headquarters and key diplomatic and institutional stakeholders, including the capacity to facilitate strategic planning and sustain strategic multi-stakeholder planning and support frameworks.
- Deepen regional and institutional partnerships through joint mandates, mutual support arrangements, and coordinated efforts, including operationalising UNSC resolution 2719 (2023).
- Push for institutional realignment including Security Council reform and Secretariat reorganisation.

- Make greater use of the General Assembly and Peacebuilding Commission to advise and complement the Security Council, or to mandate and support peace operations when the Council is deadlocked.
- Invest in renewable energy and climate-resilient mission and T/PCC equipment and systems.
- Encourage collective burden-sharing through flexible financial and other resource contributions, for example options for T/PCCs to contribute personnel and equipment without reimbursement to reduce costs.
- Leverage emerging technologies, such as AI applications as well as remote sensing for monitoring, early warning and support to policy- and decision-making.

C. Key Factors and Core Principles

Conditions for Effectiveness

Strong and sustained political support. Unified Security Council backing and regional alignment provide political legitimacy and credibility for operational action. **Example:** In 2013, strong and coherent support from the UN Security Council, the AU and countries in the region shaped the political context within which MONUSCO and the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) was able to support the Government of the DRC to defeat the M23 rebel group.

Clear and prioritised mandates. Focused tasks matched with adequate resources allow missions to concentrate on achievable goals. **Example:** MONUSCO's focus on Protection of Civilians improved mission outcomes.

Host-state cooperation. Genuine government cooperation enables mobility, community access and support to state capacity-building. **Example:** Due to a deteriorating relationship with the Malian government, MINUSMA faced severe restrictions to its freedom of movement in turn limiting its ability to monitor and report on human rights violations and protect civilians.

Strong community engagement. Trust and early warning networks enhance credibility and access to information. **Example:** MONUSCO's community alert networks and women mediator initiatives improved violence prevention efforts due to a deeper understanding of local protection concerns.

Adequate resources and rapid mobility. Missions that are equipped with sufficient enablers (helicopters, quick reaction forces) and can deploy quickly and flexibly protect civilians more effectively. **Example:** UNMISS's mobile patrols in later years extended beyond static PoC sites to high-risk rural areas.

Ability to leverage inherent strengths of peace operations. Missions tend to be more effective when they can:

- Draw on their perceived impartiality (compared to bilateral or regional interventions), such as UNMISS' mediation role in localised peace agreements in South Sudan.
- Take integrated approaches linking peace, security, development and humanitarian dimensions, including on cross-cutting issues like the protection of civilians, rule of law, human rights or WPS.

- Convene diverse stakeholders in inclusive peace processes, as UNITAMS did prior to the 2021 coup.

D. Barriers for Adaptive Peace Operations

D.1. Political Barriers

Security Council disunity and geopolitical rivalries delay or weaken mandates, undermine sustained and consistent implementation on cross-cutting issues like human rights or women, peace and security, and hamper adaptive, tailored approaches. **Example:** UNITAMS support for Sudan's complex transition was hampered due to conflicting interests and limited cohesive support, especially after the 2021 coup.

Host-state consent is leveraged as a political bargaining tool to discourage criticism and limit UN influence, including by manipulating narratives and instrumentalising mis- and disinformation. Host-state obstruction also reduces effectiveness by for example restricting movement and access to certain areas or withholding or delaying approval for flights and patrols. **Example:** Regular access denials of UNMISS patrol requests limit and delay POC approaches in South Sudan.

Mandates misaligned with political realities reflect Member State compromises and undermine clear Security Council messaging to local actors and guidance to Secretariat and missions. **Example:** Limited political support and UNISFA's one-**dimensional** mandate left the mission in a security-focused holding pattern, isolated from peacebuilding tools.

Mission exits are politicised, i.e. driven by political and financial considerations rather than conditions-based transition frameworks and actual conflict risk. **Example:** UNAMID and MINUSMA were withdrawn under pressure leaving a security vacuum.

Weak local institutions limit local engagement options, require time for capacity and institutional development and delay sustainable exits. **Example:** Weak, politicised and at times predatory Government of South Sudan institutions offered few entry points for UNMISS to engage and undermined sustainability and exit.

Recommendations:

- Avoid political rivalry among UNSC members that affects unrelated mandate renewals by using Security Council working groups or informal expert groups to develop consensus at expert level on technical aspects of mandates.
- Negotiate consent as a conditional process with performance benchmarks for example by entering into compacts with host states which clarify mutual responsibilities that, amongst others, guarantee freedom of movement as a prerequisite for the provision of other mission services and support.
- Base mandates on integrated political risk analysis and performance assessments with regular reviews and recommendations for mandate adaptations.
- Pursue joint planning and strategy development with host state to codify shared political, security and transition priorities and reflect these in mandate language.
- Develop multi-stakeholder transition compacts aligned with political milestones and a monitoring and evaluation process that drive regular reviews and adaptations. Engage host state and civil society early in joint transition planning.

- Strengthen inclusive consultations with governments, local authorities, civil society and women's networks, and further institutionalise joint accountability frameworks.
- Institutionalise structured liaison and cooperation with regional actors, including joint planning, joint assessments and joint reporting, and ensure well-defined division of labour.
- Prioritise realistic, achievable objectives by aligning mandate implementation with local priorities and available resources.

D.2. Organisational and Operational Barriers

Complex security environments with a fragmented landscape of armed actors complicate protection, including when host-state security institutions themselves, or their proxies, pose a protection risk to civilians. Violent extremist groups and others that do not recognise the UN as impartial, and view UN personnel as combatants, pose increased risk to peace operations personnel and reduce options for dialogue. **Example:** MONUSCO contended with over 100 armed factions in eastern DRC, complicating support to political processes and protection of civilians. In addition, it operates alongside and sometimes in support of national security services that themselves, at times, pose a protection risk to civilians, or that at other times deny MONUSCO access. Together, these factors create a very complex operating environment that demands continuous diplomacy, pragmatism and adaptation.

Absence of field presence or physical access creates barriers to monitoring, trust-building, responding to local needs and sustaining dialogue with national actors. **Example:** UNMHA operates under severe movement restrictions and limited personnel deployment due to security risks and lack of full cooperation from parties. This has constrained its ability to verify ceasefire compliance or build local confidence in the peace process.

Institutional rigidity and path dependency prevent missions from testing new innovations and scaling operations in affected locations according to evolving crisis needs. **Example:** UNITAMS was established in accordance with the special political mission model and therefore did not include a protection element in Darfur, although time proved that to have been much needed.

Slow deployment of key capabilities and logistical inflexibility hinder early impact and adaptive crisis response. **Example:** MINUSMA's footprint in northern Mali was impacted by aviation gaps and slow force generation.

Inconsistent civilian-military integration undermines strategic coherence in mandate delivery. **Example:** At times, UNMISS struggled to coherently align its political, military, police and community engagement efforts.

Weak internal coordination across pillars (political, developmental and humanitarian) creates mandate overlaps or gaps in delivery, reducing coherence. **Example:** UNAMI faced disconnects between its advisory role and UNDP programmes, lacking in part a clear distinction of roles.

Inadequate field-based planning and limited flexibility (staff, budgets and mission HQ direction) restricts the ability of field offices to adjust to real-time dynamics. **Example:** In UNMISS and MONUSCO, Heads of Field Offices have limited ability to adapt planned

actions that have been approved and budgeted for by mission HQ divisions, such as protection, human rights, etc.

Skills and capacity gaps in specialised areas, such as digital **threats** or transitional justice, reduce a mission's relevance and ability to adapt. **Example:** BINUH lacked technical advisers for justice sector reform, hindering the missions' ability to provide crucial strategic guidance and technical support to Haitian authorities.

Staff turnover undermines continuity and institutional memory and disrupts trust-building with local partners. **Example:** Low turnover among Civil Affairs staff in UNMISS helped to sustain relationships and trust that helped long-term dialogue processes.

Recommendations:

- Establish modular models that can be scaled up/down without requiring full re-authorisation, including planning and budgeting frameworks to enable mid-mandate cycle adaptation. This could also include mobile field teams to maintain physical presence.
- Enhance use of regional standby logistics hubs and pre-authorised mediation, police and justice stand-by teams for rapid short-term deployments and expand to other specialised areas including military observers (using UNTSO as a hub), civil affairs, protection, etc.
- Empower field offices with adaptive planning tools and discretionary budgets, and integrate civilian, police and military areas of operation (field offices and sectors) to facilitate more effective integrated planning and action. Implement integrated strategic frameworks with clear division of labour across pillars.
- Improve the way missions share and hand-over knowledge and networks among staff to manage staff turnover and make more use of national professional staff to reduce turnover and increase national capacity building and ownership.

D.3. Financial Barriers

Unpredictable and politicised funding creates uncertainty in mission planning, staffing and mandate implementation. **Example:** Financial pressure played a role in the closure of several missions over the last decade as well as the downsizing of missions like MONUSCO and UNMISS, while earmarked funds limited UNVMC's (Colombia) ability to scale up verification teams.

Mismatch between mandates and budgets as increasingly complex mandates are not supported by the necessary capabilities and funding. **Example:** MINUSCA's expansive protection and SSR mandates were not accompanied by additional resources.

Inflexible budget structures limit reallocation to adapt to emerging needs and seize political opportunities. **Example:** UNITAMS lacked flexible funds for grass-roots peacebuilding when the Sudanese transition faltered.

Inefficient procurement systems lead to slow delivery of mission-critical services and equipment and hamper adaptive approaches. **Example:** UNMISS POC deployments were delayed due to procurement bottlenecks.

Declining political support for assessed contributions and shrinking voluntary funding diminishes peace operations' ability to implement their mandates. **Example:** MONUSCO's

shrinking budget and related downsizing of staff and troops resulted in a reduction of footprint and protection capabilities.

Recommendations:

- Extend budgeting to multi-year assessed frameworks with annual review and adjustment processes. This allows missions greater predictability and protects them from short-term policy shifts, while allowing Member States to continue holding the reins and missions accountable.
- Align mandates with resource assessments through annual costing exercises that model what mission can/cannot do, depending on more/less resources to inform operationally informed realistic budgeting.
- Introduce more flexible crisis response funds for adaptive programming.
- Explore options for expanding collective voluntary financing models, such as trust fund models or other mechanisms for pooled extra-budgetary funding, with broader thematic baskets for voluntary contributions. Enable greater use of gratis personnel or gratis P/TCC deployments to allow Member States the option to contribute without reimbursement.

E. Peace Operations Effectiveness in Specific Thematic Areas

E.1. Sustain Peace by Addressing Drivers of Conflict

Findings: Some peace operations are mandated to address underlying root causes such as exclusion and capacity gaps by supporting the reform of the security and rule of law sectors, other governance sectors, and reconciliation. These actions can only be effective when undertaken in support of host governments and society and aligned with national reform agendas.

Recommendations: Design, resource and adapt mission objectives based on analysis of conflict drivers and prioritise sustained partnerships with national and local governance and civic institutions, including by making more extensive use of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment System for UN Peacekeeping Operations (CPAS), and expanding its use to Special Political Missions.

E.2. Implementing Protection of Civilians (POC) Mandates

Findings:

Effective implementation of PoC mandates requires strong political support, adequate resources, not least for mobility, timely analysis and responses and deep local community engagement.

Challenges include mandate-resource mismatches, security vacuums, host-state resistance, limited field presence and access and complex armed actor landscapes.

POC **contributes to the effectiveness** of peace operations, when conditions permit, by:

- Protecting civilians from physical violence;
- Creating safe spaces to enhance dialogue, engagement and reconciliation;
- Building trust and mission legitimacy and fostering local support and cooperation;

- Creating secure, protective environments that are conducive to the delivery of humanitarian and development assistance.

Examples: Sustained regional and Security Council support and a clear POC mandate enabled significant UNMISS protection efforts, such as safe zones and rapid deployments. UNMISS' local peace committees and MONUSCO's community alert networks also guided protection efforts effectively.

Recommendations:

- Ensure mandates are realistic, are adequately resourced, and that T/PCCs have the necessary capabilities.
- Strengthen early-warning systems with context-specific community or other local alert mechanisms.
- Align PoC with inclusive political strategies to secure sustainable outcomes.
- Embed operational flexibility for mobile units and adaptive responses.
- Encourage host-state accountability by tying support to concrete commitments on civilian protection.

E.3. Implementing Human Rights Mandates

Findings:

Effective implementation of human rights mandates requires strong Security Council and host-state support, freedom of movement, and a dedicated, well-staffed and trained human rights capacity.

Challenges include host-state obstruction such as denial of access or non-cooperation, threats of retaliatory action against mission personnel and local partners, lack of coherent support from the Security Council, dual reporting to the UN Secretariat and OHCHR, as well as lack of dedicated human rights programmatic funding.

Human rights monitoring **contributes to the effectiveness** of peace operations by:

- Informing protection strategies, enabling early warning and thereby enhancing civilian protection.
- Strengthening accountability, credibility and deterrence through public reporting and documentation, and highlighting grievances driving instability.
- Building local trust and legitimacy through transparent reporting.
- Supporting inclusive political processes.

Examples: UNMISS human rights data guided POC deployment decisions during peak violence. MONUSCO staff and Congolese human rights defenders faced threats from both armed groups and local authorities when reporting abuses. MINUSCA built trust by working closely with national institutions and civil society to document violations and contribute to transitional justice efforts, while UNAMI's rights reporting shaped election oversight and political inclusion.

Recommendations:

- Secure stronger political and operational guarantees for access by incorporating provisions in agreements or compacts with host state.

- Explore annual joint sessions of the Human Rights Council and the Security Council to review implementation of human rights mandates in the context of peace operations.
- Strengthen local partnerships; empower and protect human rights defenders through joint monitoring and capacity building.
- Maintain independent, transparent public reporting mechanisms even amid political push-back. Use rights reports to inform mediation efforts and early warning.
- Further integrate human rights data into operational planning and early warning to inform protection and conflict prevention efforts. Partner with OHCHR and local actors for data collection and analysis support.

E.4. Policing, Rule of Law and Security Sector Reform

Findings:

Effective implementation of mandated tasks in the areas of policing, rule of law and security sector reform requires shared ownership and host-state commitment to reform – reflected in demilitarisation of public security, access to legal institutions, acceptance of oversight and support for justice and accountability – continuity of support, specialised capacities, and collaborative mechanisms for co-location, joint operations and information sharing.

Mandates in these areas **contribute to the effectiveness** of peace operations by

- **Police** components enhancing community security and confidence-building by carving out safe spaces, building capacity to prevent and investigate crime and bridging trust deficits between host-state security forces and civilian populations.
- **Rule of law** work strengthening accountability, reducing impunity and thereby addressing root causes of violence, and facilitating responsible exit during transitions. Furthermore, by supporting transitional justice, reconciliation, and conflict resolution, Rule of Law work makes political settlements more credible and sustainable.
- **SSR** contributing to sustainable security and national ownership.

Examples: MINUSCA'S hybrid court were effective where national authorities engaged despite resource gaps. UNAMI assisted in anti-corruption reforms key to sustaining Baghdad's post-conflict governance. MONUSCO's support to the FARDC only progressed when Congolese authorities accepted accountability measures. MONUSCO also integrated rule of law benchmarks as part of the transition process in Eastern DRC.

Recommendations:

- Generate further specialised capacities for example on SGBV prevention or community policing.
- Embed rule of law into core mission strategy alongside protection efforts and integrate into broader political and governance agendas. Foster linkages between justice institutions and inclusive political transitions.

- Condition rule of law and SSR support on real political commitments with concrete milestones, e.g. as part of a compact with host states that formulate shared goals, mutual responsibilities and a joint monitoring and evaluation system.
- Use rule of law progress as a metric for broader peacebuilding and invest in community-based oversight mechanisms to ensure inclusive, accountable reforms shaped by local priorities.
- Advocate for long-term funding to ensure continuity with gradual, phased capacity development.

E.5. Implementing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda

Findings:

Effective implementation of the WPS agenda requires strong political backing in the Security Council, dedicated funding and capacity, and the inclusion of local women and their networks at the grassroots level. WPS work is most impactful when WPS is mainstreamed across political, security, and justice pillars and local women's groups are engaged systematically.

Challenges include deep-rooted resistance in patriarchal societies, shrinking civil space and inconsistent political and resource support, hampering mission efforts to operationalise all four pillars of the WPS agenda.

WPS activities **contribute to the effectiveness** of peace operations by

- Empowering women as peace brokers and peacebuilders, strengthening community engagement and improving conflict prevention.
- Providing unique conflict data to enable more gender-responsive mandate implementation.

Examples: In South Sudan, women's groups early warning informed UNMISS patrol priorities and deployments. MONUSCO had to delay gender-responsive community projects due to funding gaps but also witnessed how MONUSCO-supported women mediators enhanced early warning and defused local tensions, contributing to strong local partnerships. MINUSCA saw limited uptake when promoting women's participation in local security forums. UNVMC (Colombia) reported improved local reintegration success where women led community outreach, while BINUH's (Haiti) engagement with women's groups helped detect early signs of unrest.

Recommendations:

- Mainstream WPS into core mandates, while ensuring that mandated WPS language is met with adequate resources.
- Support and engage local women networks as key stakeholders in community as well as early warning and mediation structures.
- Allocate predictable funding with specific budget lines tailored to gender-responsive actions and responsible units.
- Strengthen host-state WPS commitments in national frameworks such as national action plans and policies.

E.6. People-Centred Approaches

Findings:

People-centred approaches have been successful where they have been able to combine community engagement with adaptive security deployments and make use of local early-warning mechanisms and gender-responsive networks. In that way, people-centred approaches can support both protection and local peace processes. Where local perceptions of a mission were positive, this has helped to build trust, facilitate information sharing and enhance protection outcomes. Similarly, strong community engagement enabled missions to align with actual community needs and improve mission outcomes.

Challenges to adaptation include broad mandates not tailored to local realities, assets not suited to mobile, agile deployments, lack of institutionalised consultation mechanisms at local levels, and institutional risk aversion.

Examples: UNMISS adapted its protection strategy to more mobile deployments after analysing local conflict patterns and seasonal violence dynamics and engaging with local peace committees. MONUSCO developed community-based stabilisation approaches as well as localised transition criteria in coordination with Congolese authorities and local leaders. In Colombia, UNVMC localized reintegration monitoring by using ex-combatants as community liaisons. In CAR, MINUSCA deployments faced local resistance because communities felt excluded from planning on security priorities and deployments.

Recommendations:

- Institutionalise inclusive local consultation mechanisms, for instance with advisory councils at several scales (HQ, field) and in multiple sectors (Human Rights, Protection, WPS, YPS, etc.).
- Align mission objectives with locally informed priorities and needs.
- Establish community-centred accountability frameworks by involving community and civil society representatives in assessments of mission effectiveness.
- Support people-centred and locally-rooted protection, scale up community alert systems and local conflict prevention and mediation networks.
- Foster a culture of iterative institutional learning, based on community feedback, and adapt planning and actions to align with community feedback.
- Develop innovative ways, including with use of technology, in which community, civic and expert feedback and advice from people affected can feed into and result in more flexible and rapid responses to dynamic political and security developments.

E.7. Partnerships

Findings:

Collaboration between UN peace operations and (sub-)regional organisations is particularly effective when the partners have shared strategic objectives and agreed priorities (e.g. political transition, counterterrorism, SSR) as well as a clear division of labour. Failing to do so and partnering too uncritically particularly with enforcement operations, can produce negative reactions that in turn risk impeding mandate

implementation. Sustainable financing and political cohesion and buy-in are also critical to maintaining partnerships.

Examples: In the context of AMISOM/ATMIS/AUSSOM's partnership with UNSOS/UNSOM/UNTMIS, the UN provided planning and logistical support that contributed to the AU missions actions and its support to the Somali security forces to liberate key population centres, protect the Somali government and degrade Al Shabaab. AMISOM/ATMIS showed improved effectiveness when responsibilities between the AU, UN and the Somali government were clearly delineated and well-coordinated.

The UN mission in Mali (MINUSMA) provided logistical support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force. MINUSMA also coordinated with EUCAP Sahel Mali, Barkhane and other parallel operations to help stabilise northern Mali, but more could have been done to clearly communicate the separate mandates and roles of these parallel missions and pre-empt accusations of a lack of impartiality.

In Iraq, UNAMI leveraged regional legitimacy to mediate between factions by partnering with the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to support inclusive political dialogue in the country.

In The Gambia (2016–2017), UNOWAS and ECOWAS played a joint mediation role that helped facilitate the peaceful transfer of power after Yahya Jammeh refused to concede defeat. On the climate-security nexus, UNOWAS works with ECOWAS and G5 Sahel on addressing the link between climate change, instability, and resource conflicts, pushing for regional resilience frameworks.

Recommendations:

- Develop processes that promote a shared understanding among partners, such as joint assessment and planning mechanisms, early in the mandating process and throughout the mission lifecycle.
- Align partnership strategies with national and regional goals to improve legitimacy and uptake of political solutions, for instance through coordination platforms linking UN, host governments, and regional actors.
- Establish shared accountability mechanisms, such as joint review platforms to regularly assess the performance of the partnership arrangements.
- Institutionalise joint early warning and response mechanisms between regional SPMs and sub-regional bodies.

E.8. Addressing Mis-/Dis-/Mal-information, Hate Speech and Trust Deficits

Findings:

Mis-/dis-/mal-information and hate speech erodes local trust, restricts operational freedom, impedes mandate implementation and endangers mission credibility. Key factors include host-state manipulation, weak local communication capacity, and external interference. Counter-efforts strengthen community relations and improve operational safety.

Examples: Following violent protests fuelled by online disinformation campaigns, MONUSCO's community consultations on transition milestones helped to mitigate perceptions of abandonment. MINUSMA's freedom of movement was reduced when its

impartiality was called into question. UNMISS worked with youth leaders to promote peace messaging albeit with limited sustained impact on the occurrence of communal violence. Transparency in UNVMC (Colombia) verification activities helped counter armed group disinformation, sustaining trust in the mission's impartiality.

Recommendations:

- Include information integrity as a cross-cutting task. Deploy communication specialists early in mission planning to design context-specific messaging strategies.
- Develop proactive and tailored local communication plans in close consultation with local communities and by using trusted voices in local languages.
- Expand partnerships with community influencers and religious leaders to better understand both concerns and narratives and to amplify messaging through locally trusted channels.
- Invest in digital monitoring, debunking and rapid counter-narrative capabilities.
- Formalise (or use existing) community liaison structures for real-time feedback and rumour tracking and train national UN staff in digital risk mitigation and rumour management.

E.9. Climate & Environment: Impact on Peace Operations

Findings:

Peace operations increasingly face operational and strategic challenges due to environmental degradation and climate variability. These make mandate delivery harder, delay or scale down operational activity and exacerbate conflict drivers. Several missions have piloted adaptive responses and climate-sensitive programming (e.g. natural resource mediation, eco-based resilience building, pro-active planning for maintaining operational capabilities in adverse weather conditions). But broader success depends on mandate reform, in particular explicit language on environmental risk, cross-agency cooperation and embedding climate expertise in affected missions.

Examples: In South Sudan, competition over grazing and water intensified intercommunal violence, complicating protection efforts. UNMISS supported local resource-sharing agreements to prevent climate-related conflicts. In Mali, drought and desertification worsened rural instability and affected MINUSMA's reach. The mobility of MONUSCO and UNMISS was hampered during flood cycles, affecting civilian protection and response capacity. UNITAMS and MINUSCA lacked clear mandates on climate-related peacebuilding despite clear relevance to local conflict dynamics, but more recently MINUSCA, UNMISS and UNSOM have all enhanced their capacity to integrate climate change and environmental conditions into their assessments, analysis and planning.

Regional SPMs are well placed to coordinate cross border cooperation and engage in regional diplomacy. UNRCCA supports Central Asian governments in managing tensions related to shared resources, particularly around the Aral Sea and regional energy flows, while UNOWAS promotes preventive diplomacy on the climate-security nexus by facilitating dialogue among Sahel countries on transboundary water management.

Recommendations:

- Integrate climate-conflict diagnostics into early warning systems and mission planning to anticipate and mitigate localised violence.
- Develop climate-resilient operational plans, including amphibious logistics and operations, adapt deployment schedules to seasonal weather patterns and anticipate flooding and other climate-related shocks and pre-plan for access and protection during such disruptions.
- Scale up partnerships with UNCT, FAO, UNEP, and local government and other environmental actors to jointly develop conflict-sensitive climate adaptation and environmental peacebuilding initiatives and mitigate ecological drivers of conflict.
- Expand the role of regional SPMs in coordinating state-led climate diplomacy. Prioritise mediation on resource-sharing and environmental governance.
- Include climate, peace and security assessments, planning and reporting in mandate renewals and increase the deployment of climate, peace and security advisers to affected missions.

F. Final Recommendations

- Peace operations are in a better position to address root causes when mandates include governance, justice and reconciliation – provided host governments welcome and support such engagement. This presupposes that mandates are based on analysis of conflict drivers, local needs and link operational tasks to longer-term peacebuilding goals.
- Missions are more impactful when aligned with local and national agendas. They should prioritise developing quality – meaningful and substantial – relationships with local and national partners as part of their political and protection strategies.
- Tightening budgets and other resource constraints limit peace operations' ability to protect civilians, support and protect humanitarian activities, address conflict drivers and support political processes. To mitigate financial uncertainties, peace operations should expand joint planning with country teams and international financial institutions to pool resources and ensure that missions can contribute to carrying out core mandated tasks.
- Resource gaps can drive prioritisation of immediate protection needs at the expense of longer-term political and reconciliation processes, as well as justice and security sector reform. Member States should ensure that funding for political and peacebuilding efforts is balanced with protection needs. If not, missions can only address symptoms, which will hamper their ability to exit. Without a clear exit strategy and the means to achieve it, missions remain in place at great cost and with diminishing effectiveness.

Annex 1: Overview of AI queries – questions and sources²

Questions	Sources
B. Evolving Peace and Security Context	
How to ensure that the UN remains relevant and resilient in an era of increased conflicts, crises and geopolitical rivalries?	Open source / internet
How have disagreements in the Security Council affected decision making on peace operations?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
What are the main issues that arise in Security Council discussions on peace operations?	Open source
What type of political support have peace operations received?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
How does the extent to which peace operations receive political support influence the effectiveness of the operation? What does this political support look like?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
How has the rise of middle powers impacted the geopolitical landscape in contexts where peace operations are deployed?	Open source
C. Key Factors and Core Principles	
Under which conditions have peace operations been effective?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
Which conditions have hampered the effectiveness of peace operations?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
In which mandated areas have peace operations achieved impact?	Country-specific reports
Which factors have contributed to the effective implementation in different mandated areas?	Country-specific reports
What mandated tasks are missions well positioned to do and which ones are better done by other actors?	Country-specific reports
What are the inherent strengths of UN peace operations? What are the strengths and what are the challenges of multidimensional missions?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
How have missions contributed to political and mediation processes, including in settings where there was no viable political process in place at one point or another?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports

² For the SPM query, the questions were adapted slightly where relevant for pertinence. The query was based on open source information.

What are viable exit and transition strategies, including for missions with complex multidimensional mandates? What are good practices on the design of mission exits and transitions?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
D. Barriers for Adaptive Peace Operations	
What is hampering the flexible use of the peace operations toolbox across the continuum of responses, i.e. from lightest political mission to heaviest type of peacekeeping mission?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
D.1. Political Barriers	
List the political barriers for successful and effective peace operations (e.g. consensus in mandating and decision-making; ensuing host state consent) and propose concretely how to overcome them?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
Incl. host-state consent and cooperation	
What influence does host state consent /cooperation have on the effectiveness of a peace operation?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
Which factors determine the quality of the relationship between peace operations and host states/governments?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
How can peace operations' mandates be more responsive to the needs of host states and populations? What does deepened engagement with host states mean in practice?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
D.2. Organisational and Operational Barriers	
List the operational and organisational barriers to successful and effective peace operations and propose concretely how to overcome them?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
D.3. Financial Barriers	
List the financial barriers to successful and effective peace operations and propose concretely how to overcome them?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
E. Peace Operations Effectiveness in Specific Thematic Areas	
E.2. Implementing Protection of Civilians (POC) Mandates	
Under which conditions have peace operations been able to implement their mandates to protect civilians effectively?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
What have key challenges to mandate implementation been when it comes to the protection of civilians?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
How have activities to protect civilians contributed to the overall effectiveness of peace operations?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
What is the interplay between protection of civilians and the pursuit of political solutions?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports

E.3. Implementing Human Rights Mandates	
Under which conditions have peace operations been able to implement their mandates to monitor, promote and report on human rights effectively?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
What have key challenges to mandate implementation been in the area of human rights?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
How have activities in the area of human rights contributed to the overall effectiveness of peace operations?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
E.4. Policing, Rule of Law and Security Sector Reform	
What role does the work of the police component play in the effectiveness of a peace operation?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
Under which conditions have police components been able to implement their mandated tasks effectively?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
What role does the work of the rule of law component play in the effectiveness of a peace operation?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
Under which conditions have peace operations been able to implement their mandated tasks in the area of rule of law effectively?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
What role does the work of the security sector reform component play in the effectiveness of a peace operation?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
Under which conditions have peace operations been able to implement their mandated tasks in the area of security sector reform effectively?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
E.5. Implementing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda	
Under which conditions have peace operations been able to implement their mandates on women, peace and security effectively?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
What have key challenges to mandate implementation been in the area of women, peace and security?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
How have activities in the area of women, peace and security contributed to the overall effectiveness of peace operations?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
E.6. People-Centred Approaches	
How does the perception of the local population affect the effectiveness of a peace operation?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
How does the extent to which a peace operation consults with and involves the local population in its work influence the effectiveness of a peace operation?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports

Have peace operations been able to adapt to local contexts? If so, which peace operations serve as best practice and why?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
What are the reasons that some missions do not adapt their approaches to local dynamics? How can these be overcome?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
E.7. Partnerships	
What are examples of effective partnerships between UN peace operations and (sub-) regional organizations in pursuit of political solutions? Which factors determine how effective partnerships are?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports Reports on non-UN Missions
E.8. Addressing Mis-/Dis-/Mal-information, Hate Speech and Trust Deficits	
To what extent has mis/disinformation impacted the effectiveness of peace operations?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
Which factors determine the extent of mis/disinformation in the context of a peace operation?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
How have activities to counter mis/disinformation contributed to the overall effectiveness of peace operations?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
E.9. Climate & Environment: Impact on Peace Operations	
How does climate change, environmental factors and extreme weather events influence the ability of peace operations to achieve mandated tasks?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
How are peace operations adapting/responding to climate change-related peace and security risks?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
What have peace operations been mandated to do to respond to climate change-related peace and security risks?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
F. Final Recommendations	
To what extent can and do peace operations address the underlying causes of conflict?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports
How does a resource constrained environment affect the effectiveness of peace operations when it comes to addressing a broad set of interconnected issues?	General and thematic reports Country-specific reports

Annex 2: List of EPON Reports consulted

EPON Report Title	Focus	Year
General and Thematic Reports		
UN Peace Operations & Human Rights: A Thematic Study https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/un-peace-operations-human-rights-a-thematic-study	Human rights monitoring mandates, challenges with host state consent, and political resistance.	2024
The Impact and Response to Misinformation, Disinformation, Malinformation and Hate Speech in the Digital Era https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/the-impact-and-response-to-misinformation-disinformation-malinformation-and-hate-speech-in-the-digital-era	Misinformation, disinformation, malinformation, and hate speech affecting mission credibility and operational space.	2024
Women, Peace and Security in MONUSCO: Trends, Lessons and Emerging Practices https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/women-peace-and-security-in-monusco-trends-lessons-and-emerging-practices	Implementation of Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, gender mainstreaming, and local women's participation.	2024
How effective is policing in protecting civilians in peace operations? Lessons from the UN Mission in South Sudan https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/how-effective-is-policing-in-protecting-civilians-in-peace-operations-lessons-from-the-un-mission-in-south-sudan	Protection through policing approaches, early warning systems, and local partnerships.	2023
UN Peacekeeping Operations at a Crossroads: The Implementation of Protection Mandates in Contested and Congested Spaces https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/un-peacekeeping-operations-at-a-crossroads-the-implementation-of-protection-mandates-in-contested-and-congested-spaces	Civilian protection mandates, resource gaps, and community engagement challenges.	2022
A Comparative Study of Older One-Dimensional UN Peace Operations: Is the Future of UN Peacekeeping its Past? https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/a-comparative-study-of-older-one-dimensional-un-peace-operations-is-the-future-of-un-peacekeeping-its-past	Half of the UN's current peacekeeping missions are small observation-type operations that were first established during the Cold War in places like Cyprus, the Golan and Lebanon. This report asks if this type of smaller and less intrusive mission will become more prominent again as we	2022

	enter a new period of great power rivalry and turbulence.	
Country-Specific Reports		
A Forgotten People in an Unstable Region - The Effectiveness of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/a-forgotten-people-in-an-unstable-region-the-effectiveness-of-the-united-nations-interim-security-force-for-abyei	Security stabilization in Abyei, host-state cooperation, and humanitarian facilitation.	2024
United Nations Truce Supervision Organization: Role, Relevance, Function and Utility - Lessons for Future Peace Operations https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/united-nations-truce-supervision-organization-role-relevance-function-and-utility-lessons-for-future-peace-operations	Observational monitoring and long-term presence as a conflict management tool.	2024
Assessing the Effectiveness of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) and The Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus (OSASG) https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/assessing-the-effectiveness-of-the-united-nations-peacekeeping-force-in-cyprus-unficy-p-and-the-office-of-the-special-adviser-to-the-secretary-ge2	Frozen conflict dynamics, mandate adaptation, and local engagement limitations.	2022
UNITAMS Mandate Renewal Study: Fostering a Process of Trust and Inclusivity https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/unitams-mandate-renewal-study-fostering-a-process-of-trust-and-inclusivity2	Support for Sudan's transition, mediation, and security sector engagement.	2022
UNMISS 2022 Mandate Renewal: Risks and Opportunities in an Uncertain Peace Process https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/unmiss-2022-mandate-renewal-risks-and-opportunities-in-an-uncertain-peace-process	Protection of civilians (PoC) and support for the peace process.	2022
MINUSMA's 2021 mandate renewal in uncertain times https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/monusco-s-2021-mandate-renewal-transition-and-exit	Challenges in Mali, counterterrorism dilemmas, and exit dynamics.	2021
MONUSCO's 2021 Mandate Renewal: Transition and exit	Transition planning, mandate narrowing, and community trust.	2021

https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/monusco-s-2021-mandate-renewal-transition-and-exit		
Assessing the Effectiveness of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic / MINUSCA https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/assessing-the-effectiveness-of-the-united-nations-integrated-multidimensional-stabilization-mission-in-the-central-african-republic-minusca	Protection mandates, political process support, and challenges with hybrid threats.	2020
Assessing the Effectiveness of the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/assessing-the-effectiveness-of-the-united-nations-african-union-hybrid-operation-in-darfur-unamid	Mediating between the government and non-signatory armed movements; protecting civilians, monitoring human rights, facilitating humanitarian assistance; and supporting the mediation of community conflict.	2020
Assessing the Effectiveness of the United Nations Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/assessing-the-effectiveness-of-the-united-nations-mission-in-mali-minusma2	Alignment between the mission's resources and its mandate, including supporting the peace process, protection of civilians, and supporting the return of IDPs.	2019
Assessing the Effectiveness of the United Nations Mission in DRC / MONUC-MONUSCO https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/assessing-the-effectiveness-of-the-united-nations-mission-in-the-drc-monuc-monusco	Civilian protection, stabilization zones, and political engagement effectiveness.	2019
Assessing the Effectiveness of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/assessing-the-effectiveness-of-the-un-mission-in-south-sudan-unmiss	PoC sites, political facilitation, and transition planning.	2019
Reports on non-UN missions		
A quest to win the hearts and minds: Assessing the Effectiveness of the Multinational Joint Task Force https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/a-quest-to-win-the-hearts-and-minds-assessing-the-effectiveness-of-the-multinational-joint-task-force2	Ensuring a safe and secure environment in the areas affected by the insurgency, reducing violent attacks against civilians, facilitating stabilisation programmes in the Lake Chad region, facilitating humanitarian operations, and the provision of assistance to affected populations.	2022

Shifting from External Dependency: Remodelling the G5 Sahel Joint Force for the Future https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/shifting-from-external-dependency-remodelling-the-g5-sahel-joint-force-for-the-future2	Terrorism and transnational organised crime, intelligence, logistical and joint planning, and partnership.	2021
Assessing the Effectiveness of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) https://www.nupi.no/en/publications/cristin-pub/assessing-the-effectiveness-of-the-african-union-mission-in-somalia-amisom	Peace enforcement, counter terrorism, securing key infrastructure, partnership.	2018