

## AMISOM AND PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS: LESSONS LEARNED

By Sarah Graveline

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Top AMISOM officials in a meeting at Somali National Army headquarters in Galmudug State on October 11, 2016. (Source: AMISOM Photo; see <http://amisom-au.org/>.)

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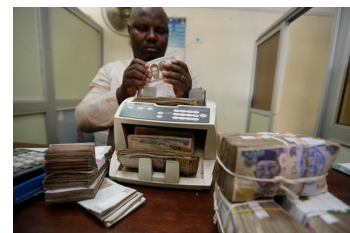
Sarah Graveline is a Research Associate in the Africa Program at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

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By Dr. Ashley Neese Bybee

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The Institute for Defense Analyses is a non-profit corporation operating in the public interest.

IDA's three federally-funded research and development centers provide objective analyses of national security issues and related national challenges, particularly those requiring scientific and technical expertise.

IDA's Africa team focuses on issues related to political, economic, and social stability and security on the continent.

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Child soldiers. (Source: UAWR, "Child Soldiers: Protecting Children against Violence, Exploitation and Neglect," [http://www.africanwomenrights.org/what\\_we\\_do/](http://www.africanwomenrights.org/what_we_do/).)

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Top AMISOM officials in a meeting at Somali National Army headquarters in Galmudug State on October 11, 2016. (Source: AMISOM Photo; see <http://amisom-au.org/>.)

## AMISOM's Cycles of Success and Failure

In its nine years of operation, AMISOM has been through several cycles of success and failure. Created as a peacekeeping mission to protect key sites in Mogadishu, AMISOM first deployed in [March 2007](#) with only 1,600 Ugandan soldiers. At the time, AMISOM was only a secondary actor in Somalia's security architecture. The majority of operations were conducted by Ethiopian forces then occupying southern Somalia. When Ethiopian forces withdrew in December 2008, AMISOM's expanded Ugandan and Burundian contingents became the primary deterrent against al-Shabaab, managing to hold key territory during al-Shabaab's September 2010 invasion of Mogadishu. This was a critical success that forced al-Shabaab to change tactics, using assassinations and bombings to attack AMISOM's weakest points, while choosing to strategically cede territory that it could not hold through conventional fighting.

Although it controlled Mogadishu, AMISOM struggled to defend against asymmetric tactics until an influx of new forces enabled it to focus on territorial expansion. Kenya, which invaded Somalia unilaterally in September 2011, formally joined AMISOM in July 2012. In [September 2012](#), Kenyan forces captured Kismayo, the coastal city from which al-Shabaab drew most of its revenue. Ethiopian forces simultaneously re-engaged, capturing territory from al-Shabaab in cooperation with AMISOM. Ethiopia formally re-hatted under AMISOM in January 2014, bringing the [total deployment](#) of AMISOM forces to 22,126 soldiers and police officers from eight different countries.

In March 2014, AMISOM launched the first of three new [campaigns](#) to push al-Shabaab out of strategic towns. These operations, which utilized Kenyan and Ugandan air power to support the rapid movement of ground forces, enabled AMISOM to control more territory than at any point since its initial deployment in 2007.

While AMISOM cited its territorial expansion as a critical success, it also exposed its forces to increased attacks. In the year between [June 2015](#) and [June 2016](#), al-Shabaab successfully [overran bases](#) controlled by four of AMISOM's five TCCs and since then has launched [progressively more sophisticated attacks](#) in Mogadishu.



## To Assess AMISOM's Impact, Consider More Than Territorial Gains

Since 2010, AMISOM has focused on territorial control as a key metric of its success in stabilizing Somalia. However, AMISOM's expansion was partly due to factors unrelated to its operations. For example, al-Shabaab's harsh style of governance, in combination with a devastating 2011 famine in Somalia, turned public opinion against the organization in many rural, famine-affected areas. This challenge to al-Shabaab's legitimacy weakened its ability to respond to AMISOM's initiatives, a consideration not addressed in the AU's 2013 [self-evaluation](#).

The extent of AMISOM's actual control over territory varies because AMISOM forces rarely leave their bases to conduct [patrols](#). This limits soldiers' ability to provide protection to populations in areas AMISOM ostensibly controls. Also, it prevents troops from forming good relations with local populations, thus decreasing AMISOM's perceived legitimacy and ability to collect intelligence about militant activities. These factors appear to have contributed to al-Shabaab's successful attack on Kenyan base [el Adde](#) in January 2016.

The focus on territorial expansion as a measure of effectiveness also disguises the impact of self-inflicted harm caused by AMISOM's failure to protect human rights or ensure command and control. In 2010, AMISOM lost critical public support after indiscriminately [shelling](#) Mogadishu in an effort to dislodge al-Shabaab fighters. In addition, AMISOM forces have regularly been accused of [sexual violence](#) against civilians.

AMISOM's TCCs have faced a variety of command-and-control challenges. The UN Monitoring Group on Eritrea and Somalia (UNSEMG) has found [evidence](#) that AMISOM soldiers colluded to sell weapons on the black market, even though they would likely end up in militant hands.

In some corruption cases, impropriety was allegedly condoned at the highest ranks. For example, Kenyan Defense Force (KDF) officers overseeing a charcoal smuggling ring [reportedly](#) paid kickbacks to senior Kenyan politicians, as well as al-Shabaab. Despite a ban on charcoal trade, the [October 2016](#) UNSEMG report finds that KDF soldiers continue to profit from allowing illicit sales.

## AMISOM within the Broader Political Context

AMISOM's current challenges also reflect broader political issues. Chief among these is the failure of the Somali government to implement effective political reforms that address the grievances driving al-Shabaab.

From its inception, AMISOM was designed to support an ongoing political reform process. As [Africa Watch](#) has noted, however, this process has remained largely ineffectual. Delayed national elections and the uncertain status of Somalia's federated regional governments has created instability in the political process, while corruption scandals and failed service delivery lend credence to al-Shabaab's claims that it can provide more effective governance. As a peacekeeping force, AMISOM does not have the tools or mandate to address these political legitimacy challenges, but until political reform occurs, conflict will likely continue.

AMISOM is also hampered by TCCs with independent political interests in Somalia. Both Kenya and Ethiopia have long histories of acrimonious involvement in Somalia. Their continued deployment with AMISOM enables al-Shabaab to make the case that AMISOM is an occupying force intent on securing Somalia for exploitative political aims.

## Conclusion

The AU remains [committed](#) to using peace-support operations as a tool to respond to conflict on the continent. While laudable, recent experience in Somalia has shown that peace-support operations can face many challenges to success. Interventions are subject to the weaknesses of intervening forces, and when these forces come from neighboring states, political challenges can be compounded. Finally, it is hard for peacekeeping operations to stabilize a country in conflict without concurrent political reform.

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The sharp decline of the global oil market beginning in 2015 marked the beginning of a severe economic recession in Nigeria. As oil prices have dropped, so have Nigeria's foreign exchange reserves, putting pressure on the naira, Nigeria's national currency. In response, the Government of Nigeria has proposed a series of economic reforms aimed at stimulating the economy and improving transparency.

## Background

The decline in oil prices beginning in 2015 marked the beginning of an economic recession in Nigeria, for which "over 90% of exports and at least 70% of government revenues come from the oil sector." This, in turn, put pressure on Nigeria's currency, the naira. President Muhammadu Buhari's initial instinct was to keep the naira artificially strong by restricting the supply of dollars and encouraging people to buy Nigerian goods. However, this policy hurt people and businesses that had struggled to obtain dollars to pay for needed products and services. Despite having a diverse economy in which agriculture and services provide the majority of the GDP, Nigeria still imports most of its consumables, which historically have been paid for in part with oil money. This summer, under considerable pressure, the Government of Nigeria (GON) finally allowed the naira to float, resulting in the highest inflation rate in 10 years and causing the country to slip into a serious recession. Hundreds of thousands of jobs have been lost, and the difficulty of importing goods has caused their prices to increase.

While most critics agree that the immediate crisis was caused by the GON's initial mismanagement of the naira, the GON has, to its credit, anticipated the need for major economic reforms to stimulate growth, diversify the economy, and create a buffer of foreign exchange reserves, which should help to stabilize the naira. In 2016 President Buhari announced Nigeria's "Economic Governance, Diversification and Competitiveness Program" (EGDCP), which has the following objectives:

1. Strengthen public financial management through enhanced fiscal performance and sustainability (expanded and efficient tax base and improved revenue collection, improved efficiency of public expenditure, and enhanced fiscal transparency and accountability).
2. Improve energy market competitiveness.
3. Enhance agriculture sector policy and institutional environment.
4. Foster social inclusion by protecting and empowering poor and vulnerable groups.

This plan is accompanied by the GON's record-setting "expansionist" 2016 budget of \$30 billion, which places heavy emphasis on capital projects such as infrastructure (representing 30 percent of the budget), as well as major new investments in security and defense. How the GON will finance this budget since its expenditures cannot be covered by expected revenues remains to be determined.

## Seven Big Wins

Despite plans to diversify the Nigerian economy, the GON continues to direct resources toward the petroleum industry. In October 2016, President Buhari unveiled the "Seven Big Wins" (officially, the Petroleum Industry Roadmap.) This is a short- to medium-term program overseen by the Ministry of Petroleum Resources aimed at accelerating the growth of Nigeria's oil and gas industry by 2019. The plan rests on an ambitious set of priorities:



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1. **Policy and Regulation**—Review existing regulations in the oil and gas sector to make it more responsive to current economic conditions.
2. **Business Environment and Investment Drive**—Put in place adequate infrastructure to increase crude oil and gas production.
3. **Gas Revolution**—Shift focus from oil to gas through new infrastructure and gas terms that would encourage the rollout of a national blueprint for backbone gas pipeline and processing infrastructure.
4. **Refineries and Local Production Capacity**—Upgrade the nation's refineries and increase local production capacity with the objective of reducing imports of petroleum products by 60 percent by 2018 and becoming a net exporter of petroleum products and value-added petrochemicals by 2019.
5. **Niger Delta and Security**—Improve security and ensure environmental safety in the oil-producing areas of the country to increase national crude oil production and attract investment and infrastructural development to the difficult terrain of the region.
6. **Transparency and Efficiency**—Restructure and revamp the parastatal institutions by instituting transparency and efficiency at all levels of operations.
7. **Stakeholder Management and International Coordination**—Deploy a potent communication strategy and build and maintain robust relationships with stakeholders within and outside the petroleum-producing community.

In terms of supporting the first priority, the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) would facilitate greater regulation of the petroleum industry by [requiring](#) the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) to split into two independent entities—the National Petroleum Company (NPC) and National Asset Management Company. A contested piece of legislation that addresses several aspects of the Nigerian petroleum industry, the PIB has been stalled in parliament for over a decade. Although several key issues remain, the PIB recently passed a second Senate reading, an indication that the legislation might move forward over the next few weeks.

Another way in which the GON plans to implement the Seven Big Wins roadmap is through a [\\$10 billion Niger Delta Infrastructure Fund](#), which President Buhari recently announced. The fund is to improve petroleum infrastructure in the Niger Delta. President Buhari envisions both new and renovated facilities and infrastructure in the region to attract new investors while also facilitating development. This will be a public-private program, funded through Nigerian and private sector investments. To provide transparency in the financing, the GON is also planning to adopt a joint account with private investors to ensure transactions are visible to all stakeholders.

A potentially challenging unintended consequence of this increase in infrastructure spending is that it will necessitate the reallocation of funds from the 2009 Amnesty Program in the oil-producing Niger Delta, which has been an important success. In 2009, approximately 30,000 militants who had sabotaged oil facilities laid down their arms in exchange for cash payments and, in some cases, schooling abroad. This program has maintained a fragile peace, although it has not facilitated any long-term solutions through job creation or other economic improvements. While President Buhari has often referred to an “exit plan” that will gradually remove this financial burden from the GON, the 2016 budget cut funding for this program by approximately [70 percent](#)—far from a gradual decline. With little economic development or new job opportunities in the region, some militants may choose to resume the violent tactics that destabilized the Niger Delta region for decades.

## Conclusion

To revitalize its economy and surmount the current economic crisis, the GON appears to be pursuing a two-pronged strategy: (1) using the EGDGP to stimulate economic growth and reduce dependence on the oil sector and (2) implementing initiatives in support of the Seven Big Wins roadmap to rehabilitate and grow the petroleum sector. Some critics may consider this approach as contradictory, interpreting the EGDGP as a gesture to multinational financial institutions that require economic diversification as a condition of financial assistance. A more sympathetic interpretation, however, is that this strategy is a phased approach to achieving long-term economic stability with a short-term emphasis on the petroleum sector.

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Misconceptions about women's roles in conflict have ramifications for the design and implementation of post-conflict demobilization, de-radicalization, and reintegration. Failing to effectively deal with women and girls undermines the ability of these programs to stabilize post-conflict countries and to reduce the risk of these communities relapsing into violence.

## Background

More than 15 years ago, the United Nations adopted UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, "a landmark international legal framework that addresses not only the inordinate impact of [war on women](#), but also the pivotal role women should and do play in conflict management, conflict resolution and sustainable peace." Given that Africa hosts a significant proportion of the world's ongoing conflicts, as well as a number of post-conflict reintegration programs from previous wars, the implementation of UNSCR 1325 had special significance for the continent. UNSCR 1325 helped catalyze the movement toward "gender mainstreaming," a sweeping process that "involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality [are central to all activities](#)—policy development, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects." Despite the considerable gains made in incorporating women into programs related to peacemaking, peace building, and post-conflict reconciliation, women and girls remain classified primarily as "victims." This classification ignores the ways in which women contribute to violence and are integral parts of conflicts. In sub-Saharan Africa, it has been estimated that up to [30 percent of fighters](#) are female. Of the women and girls in the Lord's Resistance Army surveyed, 12 percent reported that their "primary" role was as a fighter; an additional 49 percent said it was their "secondary" role. Misconceptions about women's roles in conflict have ramifications for the design and implementation of post-conflict demobilization, de-radicalization, and reintegration programming. Failing to effectively incorporate women and girls undermines the ability of these programs to stabilize post-conflict countries and reduce the risk of these communities relapsing into violence.



**Child soldiers.** (Source: UAWR, "Child Soldiers: Protecting Children against Violence, Exploitation and Neglect," [http://www.africanwomenrights.org/what\\_we\\_do/](http://www.africanwomenrights.org/what_we_do/).)

## Evolution of Gender Programming Approaches

A review of the transformation of gender policy since the mid-20th century reveals that much progress has been made in considering the totality of women's experiences. The [United Nations Development Program \(UNDP\)](#) sketches a rough outline of this evolution, observing that the 1950s and 1960s were characterized by the "welfare approach," in which "the emphasis on women was on their reproductive roles as mothers and homemakers." This approach assumed that women were "economically dependent on male breadwinners."

This assumption began to fade away in the early 1970s, as researchers focused their attention on the "division of labor based on sex, and the impact of development and modernization strategies on women." This analytical framework gave rise to the "Women in Development" (WID) approach, which asserted, "the gap between men and women can be bridged by remedial measures within the existing structures." Because the WID approach "provided women with additional resources but no power to manage these resources," it often increased the burden on them.



WID gave way to the “Gender and Development” (GAD) approach, which gained currency in the 1980s. GAD emphasized the unequal power dynamics between men and women; as UNDP [observed](#), “the term gender arose as an analytical tool from an increasing awareness of inequalities due to institutional structures.” By the mid-1990s GAD was supplanted by the idea of “gender mainstreaming.” The notion that gender issues need to be brought into the mainstream was on display during the UN’s Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Since then, gender mainstreaming has continued to gain momentum, but a number of critical gaps remain. For example, in 2001, the same UNDP documents that encouraged holistic understandings of women’s roles in war included problematic examples and relied on stereotypes. For example, a checklist for assessing needs in conflict situations [included as one of its items](#) “protect both women and men from violence (e.g., women: sexual violence; men: forced recruitment in the armed forces).”

## Prevalence of Women in War

Despite the overarching narrative of women as “victims” or “camp followers,” evidence is emerging that women play critical roles in modern conflict in Africa—providing not only logistical support, but also serving as fighters. The Democratic Progress Institute emphasizes that women undertake “a [plethora of roles](#)—and in some cases may alternate between various responsibilities, including armed activities like frontline combat or defending camps, to more traditionally ‘female’ support functions such as providing essential services such as cooking, cleaning, agricultural labor and trade.”

Many reviews of women’s participation in conflict place an inordinate amount of attention on sexual violence and conscription. Although there is “[extensive evidence](#)” of sexual violence against women in armed groups and of women and girls being “taken as ‘bush wives’ . . . it would be inaccurate to assume that all women ex-combatants have been the subject of abuse.”

Women do not make up the majority of combatants in conflicts (including those in sub-Saharan Africa), but ignoring the prevalence of women as fighters “conceal[s] their [full range](#) as political and social actors.” [Nascent research](#) on women’s motivation for joining armed groups reveals a variety of recruitment patterns. There are those women who “join armed forces for the same ideological or political reasons as men—such as a desire for self-government or autonomy,” those who “join as an alternative or escape from oppression or traditional gender roles, particularly in conflict settings where armed groups have explicitly included gender equality as one of its principles,” and those who are recruited through [kin or family networks](#). Failing to appreciate the full scope of women’s participation in armed groups limits the effectiveness of post-conflict programming and combatant demobilization programs.

## Gender and Demobilization in Sub-Saharan Africa

Despite the growing influence of gender mainstreaming, few disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs are designed with women in mind. For example, even though roughly [one-third of the fighters in the Sierra Leone conflict were female](#), only 6.5 percent of adult participants and only [7.4](#) percent of child soldier participants in that country’s DDR program were female.

Some progress has been made toward including women in DDR programs. Liberia’s experience demonstrates that making a concerted effort to include women has a sizable impact. The [2004 DDR program in Liberia](#),<sup>1</sup> in which 17 percent of the demobilized ex-combatants who participated in the program were female, marked a steep increase from the low rates of female participation in the 1997 DDR program, which was designed and implemented prior to gender-mainstreaming efforts.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Coulter, Persson, and Utas. “Young Female Fighters in African Wars: Conflict and Its Consequences,” Policy Dialogue #3, The Nordic Africa Institute, 20.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 264, footnote 4.



Despite this progress, there are still significant gaps in DDR programming. Even when women are included, their “[special needs](#)” are rarely addressed: no female clothing in the aid packages, no tampons or pads, no reproductive healthcare, etc.” Often, even the livelihood support programs that DDR programs include are [tailored to men](#).

This is a particularly pernicious oversight, because women associated with armed groups face significant stigma when they seek reintegration into their communities. As the Democratic Progress Institute observes, “female ex-fighters are often looked upon with suspicion and fear for having been perpetrators of violence but also for having violated established gender roles.”

## Conclusion

The international community has made great strides in recognizing the roles of women in modern conflict. But as evidenced by the continued marginalization of women in post-conflict programming and the widespread misconception of women as mere victims of conflict, there is still much work to be done to fulfill the mandate of UNSCR 1325.

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