

# IMS Office of the Gender Advisor: The Sahel and the Gender Perspective

## What is it?

In the Sahel, different local and international actors are promoting the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda. Military coups and internal tensions have had a significant impact on the G5 Sahel countries of Mali, Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso and Mauritania in recent years. While gender is supposed to be cross-cutting, it is consistently overlooked and underfunded by international, state, and non-state actors in the region which prioritise hard security interests.

## Current State of the WPS Agenda in the Sahel

The Sahel region has the highest birth rate in the world, prevalent forced marriage and large gender literacy gaps. In addition, women and girls are disproportionately affected by weak justice systems, gender-based violence, limited education and low literacy rates. Despite Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad all having or previously had WPS National Action Plans (NAP), these have been deprioritised in light of the recent coups imposing military rule in four out of the five G5 Sahelian states as of 2020. The recent deterioration of the political and security contexts resulted in an increase in militant group attacks on civilians, as well as in a high number of internally displaced people. In these volatile political and security environments, external actors must reconsider how they engage with authoritarian leaders, civil society and local actors. For instance, the International Coalition for the Sahel (a regional mission comprising of France, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) has incorporated the WPS agenda into its Roadmap, which provide a framework and set of standards to move the issue forward. For example, the EU missions in Mali and Niger incorporate the WPS agenda into their capacity-building and awareness-raising activities.

## CONTEXT SPECIFICITY

- 1 Women in politics in Mali, Niger and Chad remained around **20-24% to 25-29%**. In practice the situation differs as women are hindered by gendered social expectations.
- 2 In the CAR, WPS progress was recorded. The parity law requests women to hold at least 35% of position in both public and private sectors. However, women in public administration only increased **from 8% to 12%** following the 2021 elections.

## Case Study: Integrating the Gender Perspective - Experiences from the CAR

The CAR has been experiencing conflict since 2012, where Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) is frequently used as a tool of war. This affirms the critical importance of Armed Forces' commitment to combating and preventing CRSV. Currently, the EU Training Mission (EUTM) provides operational advice, education and training to the CAR's local authorities. The EUTM Gender Action Plan and human rights trainings resulted in a reduction of CRSV cases reported by civil society and the government.

## 3 UNSCR 1325 DOMAINS OF INTEGRATION OF THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE

PREVENTION

PARTICIPATION

PROTECTION

**The military should be concerned by the turbulent political and security environment in the Sahel. This poses a significant challenge to the integration of the Gender Perspective in military operations. This unstable context requires more comprehensive Gender Action Plans and gender-focused leadership and analysis.**