



ENABLING DEPLOYED GENDER ADVISORS

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Service Paper

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ENABLING DEPLOYED GENDER ADVISORS

AIM

1. Gender Advisors (GENADs) who are deployed provide valuable expertise and guidance on integrating gender perspectives into military operations, policies and training in order to enhance effectiveness and to promote gender equality. GENADs are an essential tool for gender mainstreaming¹ within a given mission and they help contribute to strategic goals by furthering Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP), Canada's National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security (CNAP) and Canada's Defence Policy, Strong, Secure Engaged (SSE).² Despite the importance of deployed GENADs, they are not enabled to be fully effective due to gaps in preparation, support and resources. The shortfalls in investment in Canadian deployed GENADs have compromised their credibility and legitimacy on missions.³ This service paper recommends that CJOC establish an online portal to serve as a community of practice that unites people, ideas and resources to better enable and support deployed GENADs. It also recommends the establishment of a long-term WPS strategy, and that consideration be given to eventually build a structured career path for GENADs.

INTRODUCTION

2. The responsibilities and functions of GENADs within the CAF align with the core principles outlined in the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and related resolutions that make up the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, and are driven by the NATO Bi-Strategic Directive 40-1. CAF specific GENAD direction was first provided in the 2016 Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) directive on the implementation of WPS within the CAF, which called for the establishment of GENADs. The intent was for GENADs to act as "specialist advisors to the commander"⁴ providing commanders with a source of gender expertise while deployed, akin to the way Legal Advisors (LEGADs) or Policy Advisors (POLADs) provide legal and policy expertise when similarly deployed.⁵ Since the release of the CDS directive, Canadian GENADs have been deployed across the globe on UN, NATO and Canadian missions in countries including Mali, Haiti, Iraq, Afghanistan, Latvia and Ukraine.

¹ NATO defines gender mainstreaming as "a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of both women and men an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and military operations." IMS Office of the Gender Advisor, NATO, last updated 30 Aug 2023, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_101372.htm.

² Vanessa Brown, "NCGM Gender Advisor Course for CAF Professionals: A Curriculum Review" (Report, Carleton University for Canadian Forces College and the Department of National Defence, 2019), 3-7.

³ Angela Febbraro., Victoria Tait-Signal. "*Learning from the Lived Experience of Gender Advisors in the Canadian Armed Forces: Expertise, Embodied Knowledge and Legitimacy*" (Defence Research and Development Canada Scientific Report, DRDC-RDDC-2023-L064, 2023), 2-6.

⁴ Chief of the Defence Staff (2016, January). "CDS Directive for Integrating UNSCR 1325 and Related Resolutions into CAF Planning and Operations." Department of National Defence, January 2016, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/conduct/cds-directive-unscr-1325.html>.

⁵ James Cudmore, "Military to hire gender specialists for operational advice overseas." CDC New. Last Updated 30 October 2015. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/military-to-hire-gender-specialists-for-operational-advice-overseas-1.3297680>.

3. Although significant effort has been expended to ensure that Canadian GENADs are available to facilitate the mainstreaming of gender perspectives on deployments, there are persistent and common challenges that have affected GENADs' abilities to meaningfully contribute to their missions. These challenges are not unique to the Canadian context and have been noted in both international and CAF specific reports that examine the experiences of deployed GENADs.⁶ These reports provide recommendations on how military organizations can enhance the capabilities of their GENADs and better leverage them to accomplish peacekeeping and security objectives. As per the draft CNAP 3, over the next 5 years the CAF will be responsible for developing tailored training and supports for deployed GENADs.⁷ This service paper draws on observations noted in the reports and recommends effective solutions for how CJOC can better enable and support deployed GENADs by focusing on three areas for improvement: training, resourcing, and planning.

DISCUSSION

4. Unlike LEGADs and POLADs, there is no career path for GENADs. Many GENADs deploy on one-off tours with no CAF frameworks such as a capability manager, succession manager or requirements advisor to ensure long-term planning or coordination of GENAD expertise. As a result, the GENADs who deploy are not as prepared, resourced or supported as their LEGAD and POLAD counterparts. They also lack oversight and coordination to enable long-term WPS planning within missions.

5. Bringing GENAD expertise and support in line with that of LEGADs and POLADs will require the creation of a GENAD career structure. In the short term, however, many of the above-mentioned challenges can be addressed through the establishment of an accessible digital portal that facilitates a GENAD community of practice; adequate in-mission resourcing; and the creation of a long-term WPS strategy. Some common challenges highlighted in academic reports on GENADs follow, together with a brief explanation of how the proposed digital portal and long-term WPS strategy could be used to address those challenges.

Training

6. The lack of training and formal education for deployed GENADs challenges the legitimacy of the gender expertise they provide to the mission.⁸ Unlike LEGADs and POLADs, who often have degrees in their field, years of job experience and access to reach-back expertise through the JAG or ADM(Pol), Canadian GENADs do not have their own career structure and often do not have any formal education in gender beyond the 2-week Nordic Center for Gender

⁶ Febraro and Tait-Signal, "Learning from the Lived Experience of Gender Advisors in the CAF", 2023. Brown, Lee-Koo and Wittwer. "A Global Review of the Development of Military Gender Advisor Capabilities," 2022. Thomson and Filardo. "Examining the Role and Function of Gender Advisors in CAF Operations" 2021.

⁷ Global Affairs Canada. Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces Departmental Implementation Plan for Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (draft). Received 5 Dec 2023.

⁸ Angela Febraro., Victoria Tait-Signal. "*Learning from the Lived Experience of Gender Advisors in the Canadian Armed Forces: Expertise, Embodied Knowledge and Legitimacy*" (Defence Research and Development Canada Scientific Report, DRDC-RDDC-2023-L064, 2023), 6.

in Military Operations (NCGM) Gender Advisor Course which some take prior to deployment.⁹ Although the 2-week course meets both the UN and NATO minimum requirements for GENADs, it does not meet the Government of Canada objectives laid out in policy and direction from Status of Women Canada on GBA Plus, FIAP and SSE.¹⁰ The lack of relevant knowledge, experience and training has left many Canadian GENADs ill-prepared for their deployed role.¹¹

7. Ideally, a structured career path should be established for military GENADs to foster gender expertise both institutionally and operationally.¹² For CAF members, serving as a GENAD falls outside their primary occupation, leading to potential undervaluation of their performance and negative impacts on promotion. This discrepancy contradicts the CAF's dedication to gender equality. Instituting a dedicated career track for GENADs would not only provide a pathway for individuals demonstrating interest and proficiency in this field but would also acknowledge the specialized technical and knowledge-based skills essential for the role. Creating a separate career path will take time and is outside of CJOC's area of responsibility, but in the interim, there are areas that can be improved upon to better prepare GENADs in their deployed roles.

8. Recognizing the need to develop its own curriculum for a Canadian Gender Advisor Course, the CAF is currently designing a course that will go beyond the learning objectives of the NCGM Gender Advisor Course and satisfy Government of Canada requirements. However, that proposed course is currently envisioned to be only a 2-week course and should not be seen as a complete solution to the specific challenge of lack of training noted above. Becoming a GENAD should be seen by the CAF as a long-term professional investment.¹³ Ongoing professional development (PD) opportunities could be offered to prospective, current and past GENADs.¹⁴ These opportunities to learn and connect can serve to augment capacity building from the Gender Advisor Course, keep GENAD skills current, encourage networking, boost GENAD confidence and perhaps even spark interest amongst GENADs in pursuing additional GENAD deployments. A digital portal could be a useful tool to support, promote and host ongoing PD sessions. Part of the portal could include a calendar of upcoming PD sessions with information or links by which to connect.

Access to Resources

⁹ Although Canada strives to ensure deployed GENADs receive the NCGM GENAD course before deploying, Canada has limited seats on the course (typically only 2/year) and during COVID, Canadians did not have access to the course.

¹⁰ Vanessa Brown, "NCGM Gender Advisor Course for CAF Professionals: A Curriculum Review," 3.

¹¹ Angela Febbraro., Victoria Tait-Signal. "*Learning from the Lived Experience of Gender Advisors in the Canadian Armed Forces: Expertise, Embodied Knowledge and Legitimacy*," 6.

¹² Sarah Brown, Eleanor Gordon, Katrina Lee-Koo and Jennifer Wittwer. "A Global Review of the Development of Military Gender Advisor Capabilities". (Report. Monash University. 2022), 31.

¹³ Michael Thomson and Emily-Ana Filardo. "*Examining the Role and Function of Gender Advisors in Canadian Armed Forces Operations and Evaluating Prototype Counter-Radicalization Messages*", (Defence Research and Development Canada Scientific Report, DRDC-RDDC-2021-C032, 2021), 13.

¹⁴ Sarah Brown, Eleanor Gordon, Katrina Lee-Koo and Jennifer Wittwer. "A Global Review of the Development of Military Gender Advisor Capabilities," 37.

9. In addition to inadequate training, GENADs also report feeling ill-prepared for deployments due to the lack of resources available to them whilst deployed. The reported lack of resources includes minimal or no access to Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), informational/education resources that could be helpful for their roles, and a lack of financial resources to support their initiatives and engagement activities. Currently, deployed GENADs can reach-back to either the CJOC GENAD or CANSOFCOM GENAD for advice and support. Most are unaware of the vast expertise that exists within Canada and the international community that is willing to support deployed GENADs.¹⁵ There is typically no budget assigned to support WPS activities within a mission which makes it difficult to conduct the necessary consultation with Civil Society Organizations as the mission is often unable to compensate them for their efforts.¹⁶ Deployed GENADs are often expected to build and train a Gender Focal Point (GFP) Network but are not given appropriate training resources to facilitate this task. As a result, GENADs often build a training program from the ground up and the quality of GFP periodic training is inconsistent across missions.

10. Properly resourcing Canada's deployed GENADs will empower them and strengthen their influence within a given mission. As part of this allocation of resources, a GENAD digital portal could be established to connect Subject Matter Experts with Canadian GENADs and could be used as a GENAD helpline.¹⁷ GENADs could pose questions on an open, but secure, forum to a network of experts including academics, researchers and past GENADs. Responding to the questions in such a forum would allow for all GENADs on the portal (past, present and incoming) to benefit from the answers and would contribute to sharing valuable knowledge. The portal could be mutually beneficial to SMEs, as a GENAD helpline could give academics and researchers rare access to the unclassified challenges and opportunities of deployed GENAD work and could give advocates an opportunity to contribute to making a difference overseas in real time. It is likely that academics, researchers and advocates would be interested in contributing to the digital portal at no cost, provided they received proper recognition or attribution for their work (ie. they can be provided an official SME advisory title and list advisory contributions on their CVs, DND employee members should be given time during the workday to respond to GENAD questions, etc). Additionally, the network of experts may be able to help with funding and cooperation by leveraging partnerships with other ongoing initiatives in the region. Lastly, experts may be able to supply or suggest additional resources that could be

¹⁵ Such resources include: [Women, Peace and Security Network-Canada](#), [Women in International Security](#) (WIIS), [Defence Security and Foresight Group GBA Plus Webinars](#), [Transforming Military Cultures Network](#), [US Naval War College WPS Symposium](#), the [Dallaire Center of Excellence for Peace and Security](#), [Mobilizing Insights in Defence and Security Research Network on WPS](#), Canadian Institutional GENADs including CMP and CDA, the ADM Pol desk officer for WPS, faculty at PME Centers with relevant expertise, DGEIA/WPS Section, the NCGM Steering Committee and an informal network of GENADs from NATO nations, Australia and New Zealand.

¹⁶ NATO Human Security Unit. "Partnerships and Cooperative Security Committee: Independent Assessment of the NATO WPS Policy and Action Plan- Summary Analysis and Recommendations." (NATO, AC/340-D(2024)0025(INV), 2024) 15.

¹⁷ Term coined by Dr. Alan Okros. (WPS Expert within CAF and Director of Research at the Dallaire Center of Excellence for Peace and Security within the Canadian Defence Academy), personal conversation with the author, 26 Jan 2024.

useful for deployed GENADs. Over time, a repository of useful GENAD resources could be made available for easy access on the digital portal.

11. Being a deployed GENAD can often feel isolating due to the absence of a support structure and the lack of understanding of the WPS agenda by military personnel (which is often interpreted as resistance to the WPS agenda)¹⁸, a feeling that is particularly acute for women GENADs.¹⁹ Although some military leaders are committed to the WPS agenda, consistent support is not guaranteed across deployments. As the military is often referred to as a system of hegemonic masculinity, GENADs often face resistance from personnel within a mission.²⁰ In addition to personnel resisting the messaging, studies on lived experiences have shown that there is often resistance to the messenger, especially if the messenger (in this case, the GENAD) identifies as a woman. Women GENADs face more challenges to their perceived legitimacy than men GENADs.²¹ Given the culturally complex operational environment in which GENADs are deployed, the ability for GENADs to connect with other GENADs would be beneficial and would give them opportunity to learn from one another and to seek support. A GENAD digital portal would provide a simple but effective manner by which current and past GENADs could easily connect.

Maintenance and Oversight of a Long Term WPS Strategy

12. There is currently a disconnect between Canada's demonstrated high level political will to support WPS and the CAFs capacity to incorporating gender perspectives in military operational planning. This disconnect is evidenced within CJOC by the lack of a long-term WPS plan to guide GENAD activities for missions where Canada has committed to routinely deploy GENADs. Administratively, this means that GENADs are not provided with detailed country specific pre-briefs prior to deployment, there is no collection of templates, procedures or guidance for the GFP training that needs to be given by the GENAD during their tour, their in-country progress is not tracked, and de-briefs and lessons learned are neither consistently recorded nor shared with the appropriate organizations. Operationally, the consequences of not managing a long-term WPS plan are even more pronounced. GENADs entering theatre are often ill-prepared, relying primarily on cursory pre-deployment training and a turnover to orient them to their role within the mission. As incoming GENADs are not accountable to carry on the work of their predecessors, it can result in a lack of continuity in WPS programs that can affect the credibility of the mission if initiatives are left incomplete. The absence of continuity or long-term

¹⁸ NATO Human Security Unit. "Partnerships and Cooperative Security Committee: Independent Assessment of the NATO WPS Policy and Action Plan - Summary Analysis and Recommendations."6. Stefanie von Hlatky, *Deploying Feminism* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2023), 381.

¹⁹ Angela Febbraro., Victoria Tait-Signal. "*Learning from the Lived Experience of Gender Advisors in the Canadian Armed Forces: Expertise, Embodied Knowledge and Legitimacy.*" 6.

²⁰ K. A. M. Wright, M. Hurley, & J Gil Ruiz. *NATO, gender and the military: Women organising from within* (New York, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019). Ch 1.

²¹ Michael Thomson and Emily-Ana Filardo. "*Examining the Role and Function of Gender Advisors in Canadian Armed Forces Operations and Evaluating Prototype Counter-Radicalization Messages*", (Defence Research and Development Canada Scientific Report, DRDC-RDDC-2021-C032, 2021), 12.

planning can also discourage GENADs from embarking on long-term initiatives which often have the greatest probability of meaningful change.

13. On missions for which Canada has committed to routinely deploy GENADs, long-term WPS plans should be implemented and be overseen by the CJOC or CANSOFCOM GENAD. GENADs preparing for deployment should receive a pre-brief to inform them of the plan, where they fit into that plan and the resources available to them through the online portal. Upon completion of their deployment, a standard de-brief should be performed, and lessons learned collected from the outgoing GENAD. The information collected can be used to track progress on the long-term WPS plan, inform the incoming GENAD, validate the Canadian GENAD course, and to report on the CNAP. Executing a long-term WPS plan for each mission in which the CAF routinely deploy GENADs will help ensure that GENADs are better prepared before entering theatre, that there is continuity of efforts between GENADs and that DND learns from the experiences of deployed GENADs.

CONCLUSION

14. Deployed GENADs contribute to strategic Canadian WPS objectives and can be a valuable asset to a mission commander. However, these GENADs are not being given the appropriate resources to succeed. The CAF has fallen short of their original intent to develop gender expertise as specified in the 2016 CDS Directive—that expertise cannot be simply developed by a one-time 2-week course, but instead requires ongoing professional development. In order to be more effective, GENADs need to be properly trained and resourced and WPS objectives need to be part of long-term planning for missions. Realizing the full benefit of gender advice will require DND to rethink how it fosters gender expertise and to consider instituting a structured career path for GENADs. In the interim, CJOC can take meaningful steps towards supporting and enabling deployed GENADs through the use of a digital portal that facilitates a community of practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

15. In accordance with the draft CNAP 3, DND must take steps to better provide support to deployed GENADs. To this end, it is recommended that CJOC establish a digital portal that serves as a community of practice, bringing together Gender Advisors and SMEs. The portal should be easily and freely accessible to international/national experts and GENADs deployed domestically and overseas. The digital portal should serve as a help line for deployed GENADs, a repository for helpful resources, a method of networking with other GENADs and a mechanism by which professional development opportunities can be promulgated. Canadian Government experts who agree to participate and dedicate time to responding to GENADs should be given time in their regular workday to do so. Experts who participate on the network should be able to reference their participation in their CVs. Creating an online community of practice will provide a foundation for network building, information sharing and international cooperation which will increase the credibility and confidence of deployed GENADs.

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