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› Formative evaluation of the Elsie initiative for women in peace operations – Executive sum...

Formative evaluation of the Elsie initiative for women in peace operations – Executive summary

i *The findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons listed below are those of the Contractor and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of the Government of Canada. The Department does not guarantee the accuracy of the information provided in this report.

Table of contents

- [Executive summary](#)
- [Findings](#)
- [Conclusions](#)
- [Recommendations](#)

Executive summary

In 2017, Canada launched the “**Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations**” at the UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial in Vancouver. The purpose of the pilot project was to increase the meaningful participation of

uniformed women in UN peacekeeping operations, from November 2017 to March 2022.

The Initiative anchors its objectives in Canada's policy framework on gender equality, notably the Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP),¹ and Canada's National Action Plan for the Implementation of the UNSCRs on WPS,² as well as "Canada's Defense Policy: Strong, Secure, Engaged."³

The Elsie Initiative (EI) based the pilot on two main pillars: (1) support to T/PCCs by providing technical assistance and/or funding address barriers faced by women at the national level (within their military or police institution); and (2) support to the UN system mainly through programming, advocacy and outreach to support policy change in peacekeeping at the UN.

Over the pilot's timeframe, total EI program expenditure (including grants and contributions) was \$39,460,058.⁴

Global Affairs Canada (GAC) commissioned **Salasan Consulting Inc.** (the evaluation team, ET) to conduct a **virtual formative evaluation** of the Initiative's pilot phase (Nov 2017-Mar 2022). As Canada has approved a second phase of the Initiative, the evaluation will inform the implementation of Phase II. The ET submitted the final evaluation report to GAC on **December 8, 2022**.

The **purpose** of the evaluation is two-fold: (1) account for the results achieved to date by the Elsie Initiative; and (2) inform future decision-making by GAC senior management on policy and programming for the second phase of the EI.

The **specific objectives** of the evaluation are to: (1) assess the initiative's progress of results achieved to date towards stated outcomes; (2) assess the strengths and weaknesses of the initiative's design and operational

elements; and (3) provide findings, conclusions and recommendations to fulfil the stated evaluation purpose(s).

The intended **end user** of the evaluation is Global Affairs Canada's (GAC's) Peace and Stabilization Operations Program (PSOPs), and specifically, its Peace Operations Policy and Deployments Division that houses the Elsie Initiative. The results of this evaluation will also be of interest to other government departments engaged in the EI (Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)/Canadian Police Arrangement (CPA), Department of National Defense (DND)/ Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), and all stakeholders of the Initiative.

The **scope** of the evaluation included a focus on GAC, as the initiator of the EI and the role it played at establishing the initiative. The ET was not required to assess achievement of long-term results (the intermediate outcome level or above), as more time is required to achieve these longer-term results.

The length of time provided to the ET to conduct the virtual evaluation limited inclusion of the full breadth of EI **stakeholders**. Therefore, the EI provided the names of key individuals from the most relevant stakeholder groups of the pilot for the ET to interview. The evaluation team based its sampling on the review of all available documentation and intended interviews with the identified personnel from the following stakeholder groups: GAC, RCMP/CPA, DND/CAF, EI Contact Group, donors, Elsie Initiative Fund Steering Committee, the UN, research partners, civil society/think tanks and bilateral partners. In total, **52 key informant interviews** informed the findings, conclusions and recommendations of this evaluation.

In terms of **methodology**, the ET followed a gender-responsive approach, using qualitative methods and drawing on a mix of primary and secondary (e.g., reports and publications) sources of data. The ET reviewed GAC and other documents relevant to the EI. The primary source material for the evaluation came from key informant interviews. Cross-tabulation of stakeholder interview notes was a key tool in evaluation triangulation.

Comprehensive results-based documentation, such as an initiative work plan and progress reports, were not available to the ET, resulting in a lack of centralized data on progress towards results. Projects funded by the EI are required to provide results-based reporting, which the ET included in the desk review. The EI recorded short-term (output level) results in detail using “workbooks” available for each program component.

The most significant **limitation** to the evaluation was the short period available to the ET for data collection. The ET also noted the risk related to the timing of the evaluation (over the summer period) when some of the proposed key informants were not available. The ET conducted interviews over a six-week period to accommodate informants’ schedules, and received extensive cooperation from GAC in identifying and contacting primary and alternate informants as, and when, necessary.

Evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations address three themes relevant to the EI and consistent with the evaluation questions:

- Providing insights into whether and to what degree the EI has resulted in positive change for women in the military and police forces;
- Challenges and successes that the EI has faced throughout design and implementation, leading to guidance for the future for Phase II of the EI; and
- Explicit consideration of gender equality and diversity.

Findings

A. Contributions to Positive Change for Women in UN Peacekeeping Operations: Effective Implementation and Progress towards Results

Finding 1: Despite implementation delays and challenges, the Elsie Initiative developed innovative programming and policy initiatives, including policy advocacy, that contributed to overall results.

Finding 2: The EI increased the awareness of Member states, UN organizations and missions of the barriers to uniformed women's meaningful participation in UN peace operations by building on the momentum of its early advocacy gains.

Finding 3: There is limited evidence of increased capacity in UN organizations and missions to address barriers to women's meaningful participation.

Finding 4: The MOWIP barrier assessment methodology is the primary catalyst for increasing awareness of barriers that women face amongst EIF recipients and EI bilateral partnerships (T/PCCs).

B. Challenges and Successes in the Elsie Initiative: Design and Implementation

Finding 5: The concept of "barriers" as the basis of EI policy and programming provided cohesiveness across project components and contributed to progress towards immediate outcomes.

Finding 6: The EI did not clearly define expected results until late in the EI pilot when implementation had already started, affecting accountability, learning and decision-making.

Finding 7: The limited operational planning and human resource capacity within GAC during the pilot were insufficient to achieve longer-term results.

Finding 8: The political imperative from senior levels to drive the Elsie Initiative and maintain its visibility internationally put pressure on the EI to announce innovations early, resulting in an activity-based approach to planning and implementation.

Finding 9: GAC and its partners (DND/CAF, RCMP, GAF, ZPS and Ministry of Armed Forces of Senegal) did not have a common understanding of the bilateral partnerships, which showed the least progress towards achieving results.

C. Gender Equality and Diversity

Finding 10: The EI has successfully turned the spotlight on women peacekeepers, but has not integrated gender throughout the initiative.

Conclusions

A. Contributions to Positive Change for Women in UN Peacekeeping Operations: Effective Implementation and Progress towards Results

Conclusion 1: The EI is a catalyzing force that has created momentum for women's meaningful participation in UN peacekeeping that would not otherwise have occurred.

Conclusion 2: While the EI had a positive start, it has not yet reached larger T/PCCs and UN peacekeeping missions to raise their awareness of barriers to uniformed women in UN peace operations.

Conclusion 3: The EI has not yet implemented sufficient measures to strengthen the capacity of T/PCCs, UN organizations and missions to overcome barriers to women's meaningful participation.

Conclusion 4: The success of the MOWIP barrier assessment methodology in the EI pilot indicates that stakeholders are ready to own the assessment process.

B. Challenge and Change in the Elsie Initiative: Design and Implementation

Conclusion 5: The EI approach to addressing barriers provided an effective foundation for the project that can lead to identification of areas where the EI can deliver results.

Conclusion 6: In order to achieve its intermediate results and contribute to the ultimate outcome, the EI needs to review and adjust its human resource capacity and management structure to meet the challenges of the next phase of the project.

Conclusion 7: The focus on activities in the EI pilot pulled attention away from other aspects of the initiative that could have facilitated achievement of results.

Conclusion 8: The lack of an iterative design process to confirm proof of concept, in conjunction with an absence of standard program management documentation, delayed the implementation of some of the components of the Elsie Initiative pilot.

Conclusion 9: Bilateral partnerships lacked sufficiently clear terms of reference for all partners, and sufficient ongoing consultation to assess, review and affirm partner capacities and priorities.

C. Gender Equality and Diversity

Conclusion 10: The focus on “women in peacekeeping” of the EI lacked a robust gender-based approach to address the systemic barriers that perpetuate gender inequality.

Recommendations

All recommendations are addressed to the EI staff in Global Affairs Canada (at headquarters and in Canadian missions abroad).

A. Contributions to Positive Change for Women in UN Peacekeeping Operations: Effective Implementation and Progress towards Results

Recommendation 1: Enhance and focus EI activities to maintain EI momentum and achieve intended results.

Recommendation 2: Increase awareness amongst all T/PCCs and UN missions about barriers for uniformed women, and their experiences, in all stages of participation in UN POs.

Recommendation 3: Adopt new measures to strengthen the capacity of T/PCCs, UN organizations and missions to overcome barriers to women’s meaningful participation.

Recommendation 4: Support T/PCCs and UN missions in promoting and disseminating learning from their own MOWIP barrier assessments.

B. Challenge and Change in the Elsie Initiative: Design and Implementation

Recommendation 5: Focus on barriers and opportunities for women’s meaningful participation that include their context and possible connections to effectively address them.

Recommendation 6: In order to achieve its intermediate results and contribute to the initiative's ultimate outcome, the EI needs to review and adjust its human resource capacity and management structure to meet the challenges of the next phase of the project.

Recommendation 7: Conduct wider consultations with the Women, Peace and Security community and other stakeholders before the Phase II design is finalized.

Recommendation 8: Develop program management systems, processes, and tools to strengthen accountability, learning, and sustainability of the initiative.

Recommendation 9: Provide ongoing coordination and management support to bilateral partnerships and to new T/PCC partners.

C. Gender Equality and Diversity

Recommendation 10: Integrate gender equality and diversity more deliberately within the EI and engage uniformed women and men at all levels and in all components of the Initiative.

Footnotes

- 1 Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy, Global Affairs Canada, Government of Canada, Ottawa, 2017:
https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/priorities-priorites/policy-politique.aspx?lang=eng.
- 2 Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, Government of Canada, 2017:
https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/gender_equality-egalite_des_genres/cnap_wps-pnac_fps.aspx?lang=eng.
- 3 Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy, Government of Canada, 2017: <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/canada-defence-policy.html>.
- 4 Does not include operational costs such as advocacy or events; does include the \$2.5 million contribution made to the EIF in 2020 from a special purpose fund.

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