



**GENDER, PEACE & SECURITY IN BRIEF #3**

# **How can we increase the impact of National Action Plans on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325?**

**Mirsad “Miki” Jacevic**  
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## INTRODUCTION

As with many international policies and frameworks, the success of the international women, peace and security (WPS) agenda strongly depends on the implementation – not just at the international, but also at the national and local levels.<sup>1</sup> There are various forms in which such commitments are realized, such as by mainstreaming gender, peace and security issues into other policies, either generic gender policies or mainstreaming gender into existing peace and security initiatives or legislation.

**For the last decade, the adoption of National Action Plans (NAPs) to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) and its subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security have become some of the most systematic ways of WPS implementation. NAPs commit governments, hopefully in partnership with civil society, to achieve specific objectives, intended results and activities.**

These action plans have been developed by international and regional organizations, such as the United Nations,<sup>2</sup> the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)<sup>3</sup> or the

European Union (EU)<sup>4</sup>, but also by national governments. As of October 2019, 83 countries have developed national action plans and numerous governments have renewed their commitments.<sup>5</sup> Countries like Norway or Switzerland are in the process of implementing their fourth NAP. Uganda is drafting its third, in a way that is already capturing best global practices. There are also over 100 initiatives in 16 countries which aim at including women into decision-making on peace and security issues at the local level.

National Action Plans are a tool to implement international obligations and advance global and regional agendas, such as those outlined in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls and SDG 16 to promote peaceful and inclusive societies. NAPs also provide entry points for local civil society organizations (CSOs) to join the public peace and security debate on questions of gender equality, diversity and social justice.

1 The Women, Peace and Security Agenda consists of various United Nations Security Council Resolutions, including, but not limited to, UNSCR 1325 (2000), UNSCR 1820 (2009), UNSCR 1888 (2009), UNSCR 1889 (2010), UNSCR 1960 (2011), UNSCR 2106 (2013), UNSCR 2122 (2013), UNSCR 2242 (2015) and UNSCR 2467 (2019).

2 See United Nations, "UN Strategic Results Framework on Women, Peace and Security: 2011-2020," (New York: United Nations, 2011).

3 See NATO/EAPC, "Women, Peace and Security Policy and Action Plan" (2018). Available at: [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2018\\_09/20180920\\_180920-WPS-Action-Plan-2018.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_09/20180920_180920-WPS-Action-Plan-2018.pdf).

4 See for example the Council of the European Union, "Conclusions on Women, Peace and Security (15086/18)," (Brussels: 10 December 2018). Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/37412/st15086-en18.pdf>. Council of the European Union "EU Comprehensive Approach on Women, Peace and Security (15671/08)," (Brussels: 1 December 2018). Available at: <http://www.seesac.org/f/img/File/Res/Gender-and-Security-Resources/EU-implementation-of-the-UNSC-resolutions-Women-639.pdf>.

5 See PeaceWomen website. Available at: <https://www.peacewomen.org/member-states>.

## STATE OF THE ART

Governments are primarily responsible for the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda at the national level. While inter-ministerial working groups often try to address the cross-cutting nature of gender, peace and security issues, most national action plans (NAPs) are led by a specific ministry. In many countries in the global North, Ministries of Foreign Affairs or Development Cooperation have taken the lead, while in countries of the global South, Ministries of Women and Development or Ministries of Defense tend to take the lead. The genuine political will of the lead agency, as well as all executing actors, is the key factor not only for the development of the NAP but the overall implementation. Without the real commitment of both policymakers and civil servants, achieving the desired results and required changes remains difficult.

Despite the government's leadership, civil society organizations are key stakeholders. **In almost all countries, the original push for a NAP came from civil society advocacy and international networking.** In most processes, they have played a critical role – consulting on the key priorities, providing substantive input in the drafts, participating in the cross-sectoral coordination committees, partnering with government and donors to implement specific activities, and playing a key role in monitoring and evaluation.

The NAP may address many issues, ranging from the more conventional areas of the women, peace and security agenda – prevention, protection, participation – but also also mention matters such as forced migration and refugees, climate change, preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE), or security concerns for peace activities through media outlets, for example. The more concrete and relevant the objective, the easier it is to identify specific activities and to measure its implementation. Gender-sensitive conflict analysis or specific women, peace and security assessments can help to identify key concerns and priorities.

The NAP ideally lists specific objectives under each area of focus that can be reached through concrete products or outputs and respective activities. A sound monitoring and evaluation scheme that tracks how these activities meet the pre-set objectives is key to measuring the success of the overall NAP. A results-based management system<sup>6</sup> that ideally also includes a theory of change<sup>7</sup> outlining how exactly objectives such as gender-sensitive security systems can be achieved is also important. The more concrete responsibilities and timelines are discussed and defined, the easier the follow-up will be on the agreed activities. Quantitative and qualitative gender-sensitive indicators within the NAP can also help to measure successful implementation.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Development Group, "Results-Based Management Handbook," (2010). Available at: <https://www.un.org/files/undg%20RBM%20Handbook.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> See Center for Theory of Change website. Available at: <https://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/>.

In addition to the United Nations<sup>8</sup>, NATO<sup>9</sup> and the EU, many countries also have their own set of indicators at both the output and outcomes level. Regular reviews and reporting are part of a comprehensive monitoring system that ensures that NAP implementation is on track.

The planning process, measuring implementation and impact, as well as concrete activities, all need adequate resources. The major challenge for realizing the potential of UNSCR 1325, within and outside the NAPs, is a lack of human resources and adequate capacity, both in terms of a substantive understanding of the WPS agenda and the technical skills to design, implement and evaluate a public policy. The crosscutting complexity of the women, peace and security agenda makes this an even more challenging and ambitious goal, requiring a “whole of government” approach and effective inclusion of civil society.

Communications is a central tool for raising awareness around gender, peace and security issues, ongoing policy development and distribution and sharing of knowledge. Appropriate communication at the local, national, bi-lateral, multi-lateral and international level are all part of the NAP process.

8 See United Nations, “UN Strategic Results Framework on Women, Peace and Security: 2011-2020,” (New York: United Nations, 2011).

9 Chantal de Jonge Oudraat et al., “The 1325 Scorecard-Gender Mainstreaming: Indicators for the Implementation of UNSCR1325 and its Related Resolutions,” (NATO, 2015). Available at: <https://www.nato.int/science/project-reports/UNSCR-1325-Scorecard-Final-Report.pdf>.

## CONCLUSIONS

The women, peace and security agenda needs systematic and well-coordinated implementation at the national and local level in order to be effective. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution, context specific national action plans can support a government led implementation process.

International laws and provisions provide a good overview of norms and guidelines on which objectives should be achieved and implemented. Nonetheless, the more specific a national action plan is, and the more it resonates with the stakeholders’ needs and demands, the easier it will be to foster more political will and commitment, which will, in turn, lead to better designed and implemented activities with greater impact.

**In addition to good background research and analysis, reliable data and a well-developed document, the mere process of developing the NAP is equally important.**

Inclusive processes can integrate diverse perspectives from civil society, academia and policymakers alike. Groups identified as particularly affected or vulnerable may deserve special attention and recognition in the NAP. NAPs are only effective and contribute to the desired impact when they are inclusively designed with clear, concrete and measurable objectives, when they can rely on political will and adequate resources and contain a realistic and achievable monitoring and evaluation

framework.<sup>10</sup> The development of local action plans may result in even more effective and meaningful impact.

*( This brief is based on Mirsad Miki Jacevic, "WPS, States, and the National Action Plans," Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace and Security, eds. Sara E. Davies and Jacqui True. (Oxford: 2019). )*

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<sup>10</sup> See Inclusive Security website. Available at: <https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/action-plans/>.

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[www.genderassociations.com](http://www.genderassociations.com)  
[contact@genderassociations.com](mailto:contact@genderassociations.com)

Editing: Leigh Tomppert

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GAIC - Gender Associations International Consulting GmbH

Amtsgericht Charlottenburg | HRB 204659 | Sitz: Berlin

Director: Nicola Popovic