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# FINAL EVALUATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM'S NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY 2018 - 2022

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*June 2022*

[GAIC - Gender Associations International Consulting GmbH](#) (Gender Associations) is a Berlin-based, globally networked company that supports institutions and individuals to develop their capacities and competencies to promote and ensure gender equality, as well as the human rights of diverse and vulnerable populations in fragile, crisis, conflict- and post-conflict situations. We provide practice-oriented research, policy analysis, capacity-building, training, and technical assistance, including monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes, through an international network of thematic and regional experts. One of our key areas of work is on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), including assessing the impact and effectiveness of WPS programming and policy implementation.

Our diverse expertise is built on decades of combined experience working with international actors, such as the United Nations system, regional and multinational organizations, national governments, civil society organizations and academia, as well as in different geographic regions around the world. At the core of our international network of over two hundred consultants are our Lead Associates who provide both project-specific, technical advice, as well as overall guidance on the work of Gender Associations.

This report is produced by Gender Associations with the support of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office.



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>BEA</b>	British Embassy Amman
<b>BEM</b>	British Embassy in Mali
<b>CSA</b>	Comité de suivi de l'accord in Mali
<b>CBPF</b>	Country-based Pooled Funds
<b>CSDP</b>	Common Security and Defence Policy
<b>CSSF</b>	Conflict, Stability and Security Fund
<b>DFID</b>	Department for International Development
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West African States
<b>EEAS</b>	European External Action Service
<b>FAMa</b>	Malian Armed Forces
<b>FCDO</b>	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
<b>FCO</b>	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
<b>FGM</b>	Female genital mutilation
<b>GAPS</b>	Gender Action for Peace and Security
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>GMS</b>	Gender Mainstreaming Strategy
<b>HMG</b>	Her Majesty's Government
<b>HQ</b>	Headquarters
<b>ICAN</b>	International Civil Society Action Network
<b>IGA</b>	Income-generating activity
<b>JAF</b>	Jordanian Armed Forces
<b>JONAP</b>	Jordanian National Action Plan
<b>LGBTIQ</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer/questioning
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>MDAs</b>	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
<b>MEL</b>	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
<b>MINUSMA</b>	Multidimensional Stabilisation Mission in Mali
<b>MOD</b>	Ministry of Defence
<b>NAP</b>	National action plan

<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>OCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>PCVE</b>	Preventing and countering violent extremism
<b>PSD</b>	Jordanian Public Security Directorate
<b>PSVI</b>	Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative
<b>SEA</b>	Sexual exploitation and abuse
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and gender-based violence
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
<b>UAE</b>	United Arab Emirates
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UK NAP</b>	United Kingdom's National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNSC</b>	UN Security Council
<b>UNSCR</b>	United Nations Security Council Resolution
<b>WILPF</b>	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
<b>WMC</b>	Women Mediators across the Commonwealth
<b>WPS</b>	Women, Peace, and Security

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Since launching its first National Action Plan (NAP) in 2006 to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) and the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, the United Kingdom (UK) has been on the forefront of the global initiative to promote women's roles in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Specifically, it has taken the lead in shaping the priorities and the WPS agenda itself by sponsoring the adoption of new resolutions in the UN Security Council. Similarly, in 2018, the United Kingdom announced £1.6 million towards the Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (WMC) network. Its experience providing humanitarian assistance to women affected by conflict and promoting women's participation in conflict prevention underscores the UK's expertise in this area.

The UK's commitments to promote and implement the objectives of UNSCR 1325 and other WPS resolutions have been coordinated through its four consecutive National Action Plans. The consecutive adoption of the UK's NAPs since 2006 demonstrates the nation's political will and high-level commitment to the WPS agenda. It is undeniable that the continuity of UK engagement is a significant element of sustainability and has reinforced the UK's reach and legitimacy as a leading actor for WPS.

This report presents the findings of a final evaluation of the implementation of the UK's fourth NAP. The data collection was conducted between March and June 2022. The main purpose of this final evaluation was to assess the extent to which the overall implementation of the National Action Plan was successful over the years from 2018 to 2022. It strives to highlight the process of development and implementation, the main achievements, and identify key challenges and lessons learned. An analysis of the achievements, as well as the gaps in implementation, suggested actions, and recommendations to improve the design and implementation of the UK's next NAP are highlighted in the last section of the report.

## **I. GLOBAL REFLECTIONS ON NAP IMPLEMENTATION**

### **A. NATIONAL ACTION PLANS AND THE HIGH-IMPACT FRAMEWORK**

#### **1. *Background***

In 2005, Denmark became the first country to adopt a national action plan as a vehicle for the implementation of the WPS agenda. Since then, another ninety-nine countries and eight subregional organizations have followed suit. NAPs have proven to be useful tools for governments to translate their commitments to the WPS agenda into practical and measurable actions and to articulate how their efforts will be governed, funded, and monitored. In the last few years, there has been a proliferation of national

action plans, demonstrating a significant rise in governments' commitments to implementing the WPS agenda. More than half of the NAPs have been developed in the last five years. While most countries are still in the process of implementing or developing their first plan, some others, like the United Kingdom, Norway, and Denmark, are now on their fourth national action plans.

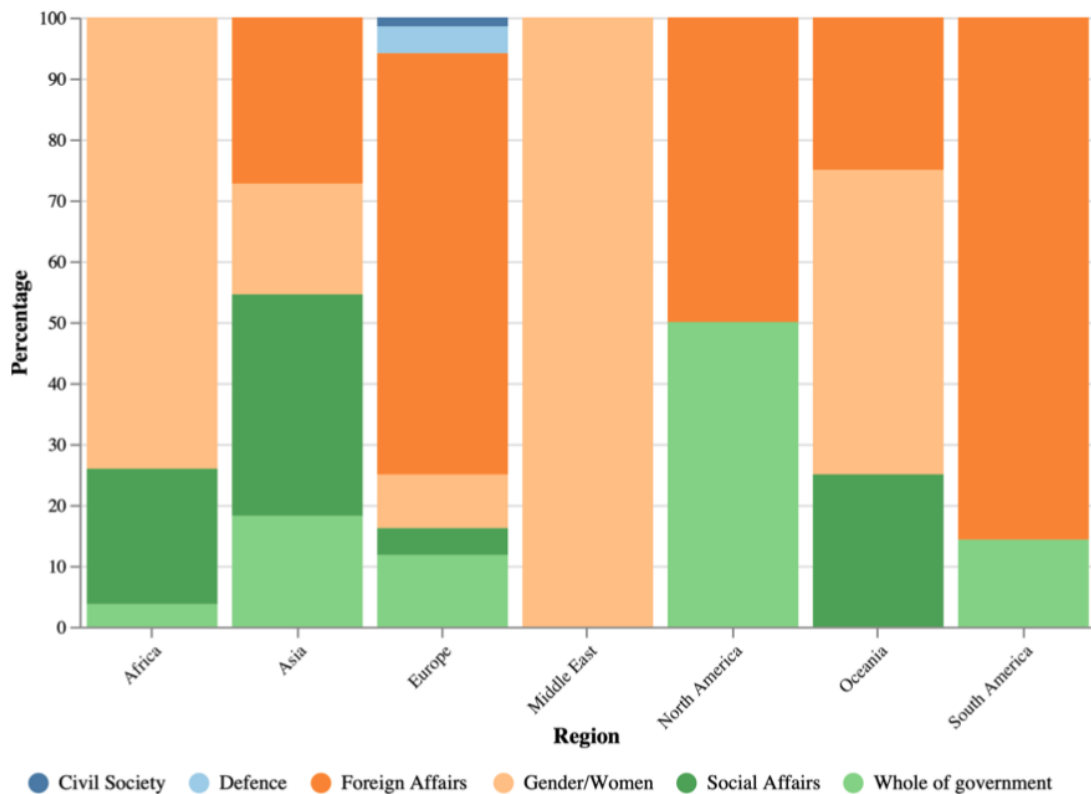
Thematically, most national action plans focus on the first two pillars of the WPS agenda: protection (including protection from sexual and gender-based violence) and participation (including the participation of women in peace processes, peacekeeping, and security sector personnel). As the agenda has grown, an increasing number of NAPs include references to new emerging areas such as displaced persons; terrorism or violent extremism; trafficking; transitional justice; climate change and disasters; and engaging "men and boys", among others.<sup>1</sup> Areas less prominently addressed within National Action Plans are root causes of conflicts and violence prevention, for example.

Typically, most European countries have established a working group or task force with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or a similar ministry in the lead. Donor countries' NAPs are characteristically outward-looking and tend to implement WPS provisions through their foreign policy. Increasingly NAPs are managed or overseen by whole-of-government task forces or inter-agency working groups. Post-conflict and conflict-affected countries are more likely to focus on implementing the WPS agenda in their domestic political context and the NAP is typically led by the Ministry of Gender or Social Affairs.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Kirby and Laura J. Shepherd, "Women, Peace, and Security: Mapping the (Re)Production of a Policy Ecosystem," *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 2020.

**Figure 1 - Percentage of the NAP lead agency per region<sup>2</sup>**



**Figure 9.** Percentage of NAPs within each lead agency, by region (2005–2018,  $n = 125$ ).

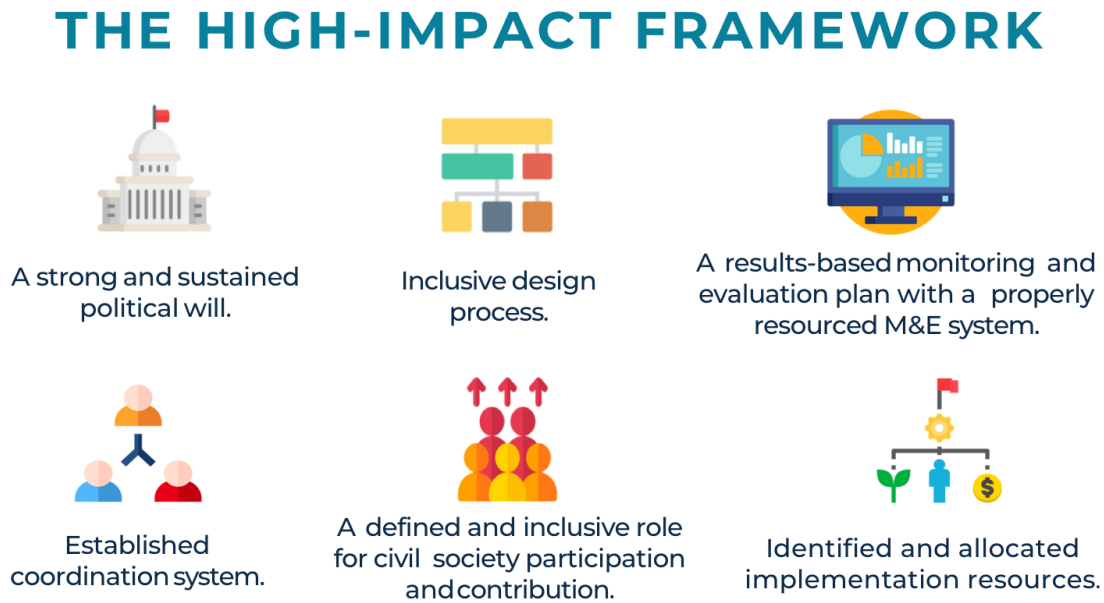
## 2. The High-Impact Framework

Based on lessons learned from the last 17 years of NAP development and implementation, the high-impact national action plan framework was created as a tool for governments to facilitate a more inclusive design, effective implementation, and efficient monitoring. Experience shows that when the elements of the high-impact framework are factored into the design and implementation of the NAP, it is far more likely to lead to transformative change.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Kirby and Laura J. Shepherd, “Women, Peace, and Security: Mapping the (Re)Production of a Policy Ecosystem,” *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 2020.



**Figure 2 - The high-impact framework**



Recommended key elements for a high-impact NAP include:

1. An inclusive creation process that leads to a design focused on results
2. An established coordination system for implementation
3. A defined and inclusive role for civil society participation and contributions
4. A results-based monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan with a properly resourced M&E system
5. Identified and allocated implementation resources
6. Strong and sustained political will.

Over the last few years, a more comprehensive “NAP Package” has been developed to integrate the high-impact framework in the design of NAPs in partnership with committed governments interested in setting higher bars to advance the agenda and occasionally in partnership with UN Women Country Offices.

**Figure 3 - The complete NAP “Package”**

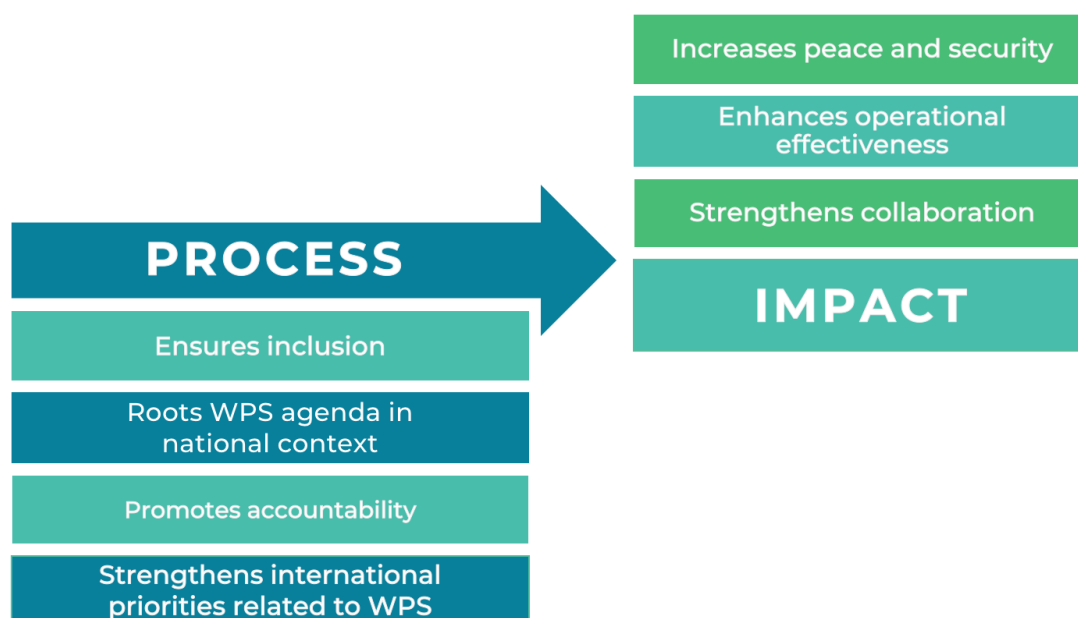
## THE NEW NAP “PACKAGE”



When successfully designed and implemented, experience has shown that NAPs are a critical operational tool to:

1. Increase the visibility of government efforts to advance gender equality and the WPS agenda at home and abroad
2. Provide a practical and operational tool to translate and localize the WPS agenda into national policies
3. Serve as a framework to coordinate and ensure coherence between activities of involved ministries and actors
4. Help ensure accountability, via an effective M&E system, to the population, which in turn can increase popular and political support
5. Bring a sense of ownership and responsibility among partners, if developed in an inclusive and participatory manner.

**Figure 4 - From process to impact**



Nevertheless, these benefits are not automatically triggered with the adoption of a NAP. While the process of developing a NAP is extremely important, it is in the implementation phase that the commitment of a government to WPS is truly tested.

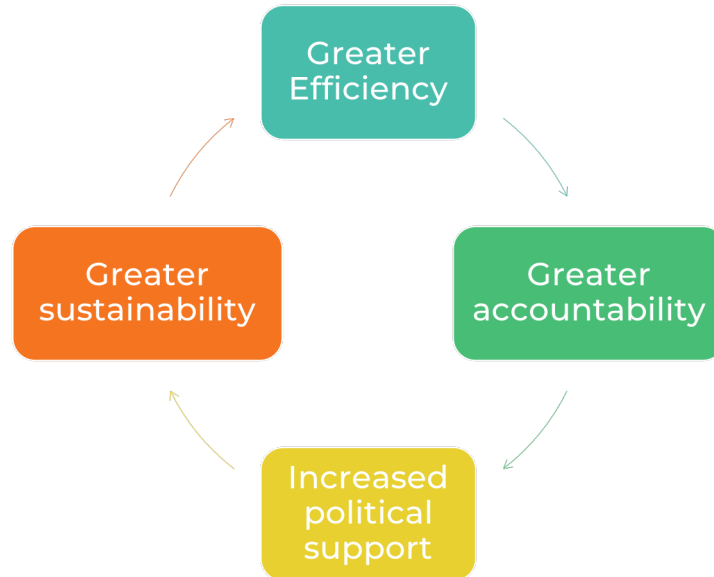
## **B. MOST COMMON CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING NAPs**

Despite clear evidence of progress, experiences of various countries in recent years have shown that the majority of States significantly struggle to ensure that the right structures and resources are in place to translate the NAP into actions and, eventually, impact. The UN Women Global Study noted that key barriers to the implementation of NAPs that meet high-impact criteria were unrealistic objectives; lack of financial resources; lack of political commitment; and lack of M&E frameworks to monitor the implementation.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> UN Women, [Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325](#), (New York: UN Women, 2015).

## 1. Monitoring and Evaluation

**Figure 5 - Advantages of an effective M&E framework**



There is a growing understanding and appreciation for the vital role played by M&E frameworks in the effective implementation of the WPS agenda. It is the only way to find out whether a policy is achieving its intended goal or how to improve it.

In the case of outward-facing NAPs, M&E frameworks continue to be a consistent source of weakness and hinder the implementation of the WPS agenda at the national level. A common pattern in many donor nations has been that even when M&E frameworks were in place, because of insufficient internal resources and commitments, actual monitoring and reporting were mostly inefficient and failed to capture the ‘so what’ aspect of desired changes.<sup>4</sup> Adding to the challenge is the fact that many government officials have little training in designing, implementing and monitoring effective, cross-government public policy that tackles such complex issues as conflicts and emerging threats from a gender lens.

As a result, many governments continue to struggle to answer answering the three key questions and challenges:

- **Political:** *Why should NAPs be a well-supported tool?*

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<sup>4</sup> Myrtilinen H, Shepherd L, Wright H. *Implementing the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in the OSCE Region*. (OSCE: 2020), <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/4/444577.pdf>.

When the government fails to answer these political questions, it can lead to unprioritized M&E plans and persistent questions about their need and purpose.

- **Conceptual: *What* is the change we want to measure?**

These issues remain unanswered when WPS issues that are deeply qualitative in nature are not supported with the necessary capacities and operational skills for the use of planning for results and theories of change.

- **Technical: *How* do we measure it?**

In order to ensure that implementation of the NAP occurs as planned, continuous monitoring is important. Results should be fed back to implementing actors in a timely manner and format that they can interpret and use.

## **2. Financing NAP Implementation**

Experience has shown that one of the most critical weaknesses in current efforts to implement the WPS agenda is a failure to allocate proper resources to plans and programmes. According to the former UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, “it is a continuing frustration that the level of rhetoric for gender equality, and the level of ambition expressed, is not evidenced in financing.”<sup>5</sup>

While the allocation of sufficient human and financial resources cannot be regarded as a sufficient condition for advancing the WPS agenda, it is a crucial component for the implementation of NAPs that has been lacking across countries. Only 34 countries have included (various) budget commitments for implementation.

Without the designation of specific responsibilities and budgets from ministries, it is unlikely that government officials with heavy workloads and competing priorities will make sure that the NAP is effectively implemented. As a result, the realization of NAP activities is often contingent on the capacity and willingness of individual officials across ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) and not an institutionalized, structured whole of government approach.

## **3. Implementing the Whole of Government Approach**

As the WPS agenda is broad as well as continuously evolving, there is a need to coordinate the efforts within different sections of the ministries, as well as ensure

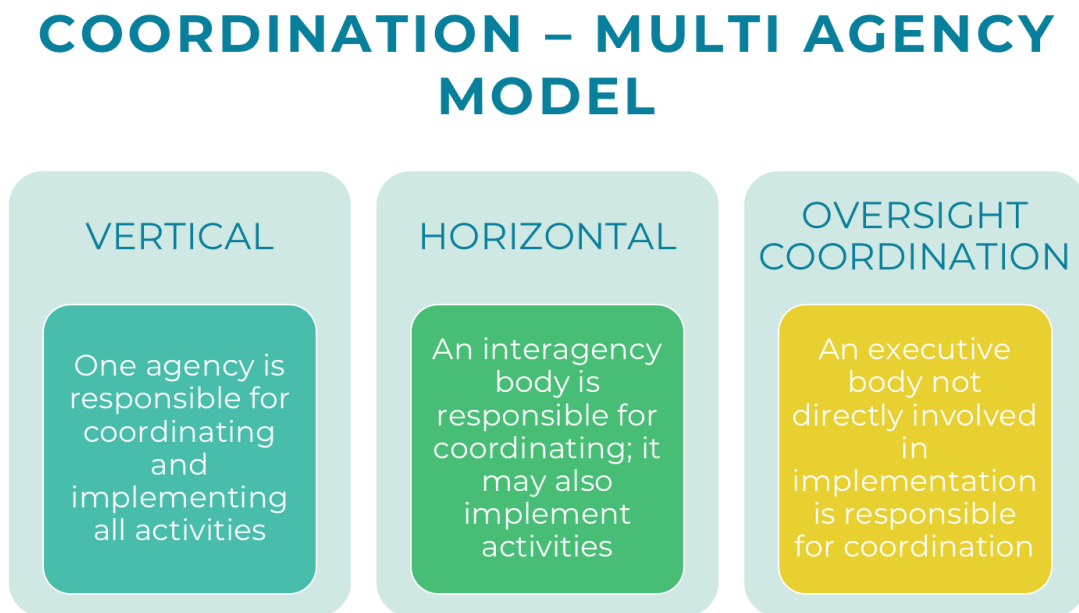
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<sup>5</sup> UN Women, [Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325](#), (New York: UN Women, 2015).

cooperation across different bodies. Cross-governmental coordination generates political support and raises awareness across various ministries, departments, and agencies.

Frequently, this coordination structure is organized at two different levels. At the strategic level, a high-level body ensures that all the relevant government agencies are involved and take an active part in the planning and implementation of the plan. Typically, it is composed of Deputy/Assistant Ministers or Heads of Departments. At the operational level, a Technical Committee is charged with overseeing the NAP operationally in their respective MDAs, finding synergies, facilitating joint approaches, and avoiding duplication of efforts. Typically, it is comprised of mid/junior-level staff.

**Figure 6 - Multi-agency model**



While there are distinct benefits associated with the whole of government approach, many States struggle to effectively implement it. Ultimately, the effectiveness of these mechanisms often depends on the extent to which the different ministries and agencies involved have operationalized and integrated NAPs into their own work. The UN Women Corporate Evaluation found that often activities promoting ownership only focused on a limited group of actors directly involved in NAP processes and neglected to build broader ownership among wider actors and institutions, such as other government ministries.

To offset these challenges, clear lines of responsibility, a delineation of tasks for each actor involved, and political will at a prominent level within the government are

required. In addition, an internal mechanism such as focal points in departments can assist in mainstreaming a gender perspective and WPS into policies.

#### ***4. Adapting and Integrating Emerging Security Threats***

The growing prevalence of threats such as natural disasters, climate change, pandemics and refugee migrations that do not fit easily within the constraints of national borders require States to also implement the WPS framework at home.

Donor countries have started to recognize the importance of addressing domestic priorities related to women, peace, and security. In its most recent NAP, Canada has committed to deepening the implementation of the WPS agenda domestically by addressing the needs of female refugees and asylum seekers as well as the insecurity of Indigenous women and girls. While it represents another significant step forward for Canada in being more reflective about its racist colonial past, the translation of these commitments into policy strategies has been difficult and imperfect.

The WPS agenda is not static, as different issues rise to prominence at various times, and new security issues emerge. NAPs should adopt a broad and flexible approach to maintain relevance and responsiveness to ongoing challenges, both domestically and internationally. Recent crises such as the invasion of Ukraine, COVID-19, and Afghanistan (among others), have claimed significant attention and national resources. Combined with other crises and various domestic priorities across countries, NAP processes have been delayed and funding for WPS has been cut or diverted. However, there is strong potential for WPS NAP principles and priorities to inform national responses to these emerging security threats, which is needed now more than ever.

## **II. UK LEADERSHIP IN WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY**

### **A. WPS COMMITMENTS**

The UK's leadership around the Women, Peace, and Security agenda, both normatively and financially has left a lasting impact on the global stage. It was one of the first countries to adopt a national action plan on WPS in 2006 and has played a leadership role in promoting the WPS agenda as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council – along with its role in NATO, the G7, the G20, and other international fora.

The UK is a major contributor to humanitarian aid, including the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. In recent years, the UK, as a member of both the informal Friends of Gender Group and Facilitation Group of the Grand Bargain, has been instrumental in pushing for a more ambitious reform of the international humanitarian system and

advocated for gender mainstreaming within the humanitarian sector reform process.<sup>6</sup> Since 2018, the UK pledged £2 million to increase women's participation in peace processes, including through the launch of the network of Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (WMC).<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, the UK has become one of the leading voices in promoting uniformed women's participation in peacekeeping. The UK has supported the Elsie Initiative, both financially and as a Contact Group member, since its beginning. In total, it has contributed £4.7 million to promote women in UN peacekeeping and make peacekeeping operations more sensitive to the unique needs of women peacekeepers since 2019. The same year, the UK held the first meeting of the WPS Chiefs of Defence Network, bringing senior military leaders to discuss the integration of gender perspectives and promote the role of women in armed forces and peacekeeping.<sup>8</sup>

In 2012, the UK launched the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) and the establishment of a dedicated UK team devoted to combating and preventing sexual violence in conflict. More recently, in November 2021, the Foreign Secretary Minister announced a £3 million boost to organisations on the frontline of tackling violence against women and girls in the context of the PSVI.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the recent cuts to aid, the UK has continually demonstrated its global leadership in preventing sexual violence in conflict. Its support of the Generation Equality Forum's Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Action Coalition and its flagship £25 million "What Works to Prevent Violence" research and innovation programme are further evidence of the country's determination to continue to improve, innovate and strengthen approaches internationally.<sup>10</sup>

## **B. THE UK'S FOURTH NAP**

The UK's current approach to WPS is covered in its National Action Plan 2018-2022. It is jointly owned by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) – formerly the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Department for International Development (DFID) – and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and is

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<sup>6</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022: Annual Report to Parliament 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>8</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022: Annual Report to Parliament 2019.

<sup>9</sup> FCDO, Press release: "Foreign Secretary launches campaign to tackle sexual violence in conflict around the world," 16 November 2021. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-launches-campaign-to-tackle-sexual-violence-in-conflict-around-the-world>.

<sup>10</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022: Annual Report to Parliament 2018.



supported by the Gender and Children in Conflict Team (FCDO) and Human Security Team (MOD).<sup>11</sup>

The NAP was designed in collaboration with civil society and academics, including the Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) network of UK-based NGOs and the LSE Centre for Women, Peace, and Security, and consultations with women in fragile and conflict-affected states in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Somalia, and Syria.

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<sup>11</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022.

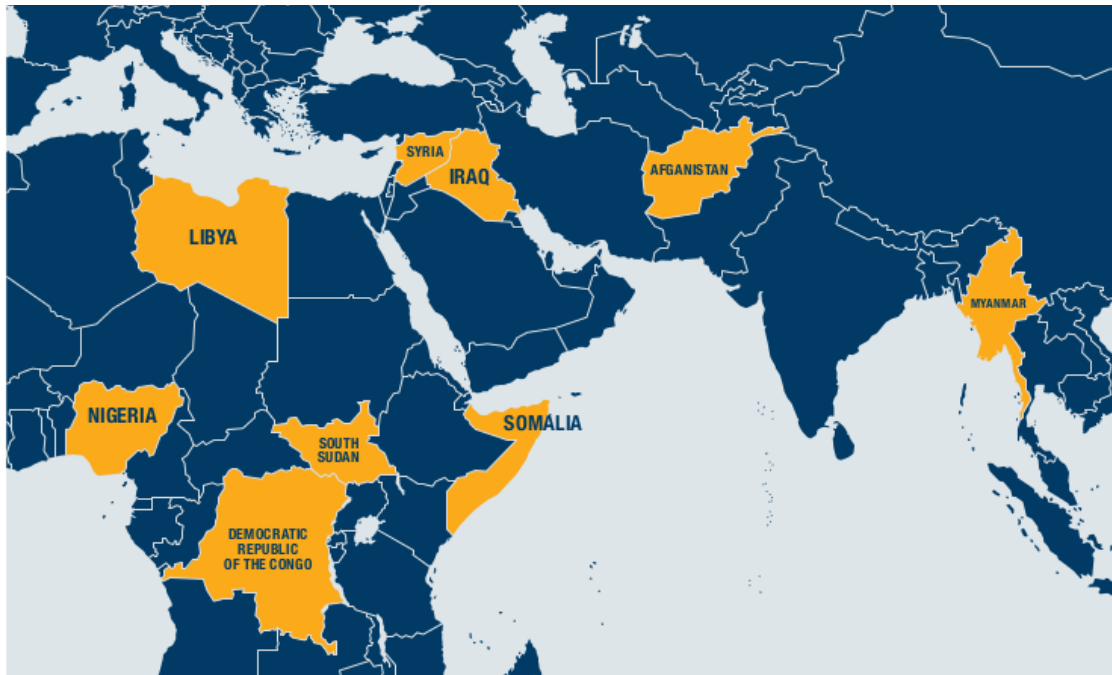
**Figure 7 - The Seven Strategic Outcomes of the UK NAP<sup>12</sup>**



The NAP is outward-looking and identifies seven strategic outcomes which have been selected based on their contributions to the four pillars of WPS, their relevance across the nine focus countries, and the ability of the UK to demonstrate a comparative advantage.

<sup>12</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022.

**Figure 8 - Focus countries of the UK NAP<sup>13</sup>**



Similar to its third NAP, the UK has selected a small number of priority countries, increasing the number from six to nine: Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Libya, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Syria.

The fourth NAP does not set out a prescriptive list of specific activities that should be undertaken to achieve these strategic outcomes, enabling country teams to respond flexibly to local realities as they see fit.

In 2021, the MOD released **Joint Security Publication (JSP) 985** on Human Security in Military Operations, highlighting how the Defence works to incorporate UNSCR 1325 as part of the wider incorporation of human security into military activities.<sup>14</sup> It superseded JSP 1325 launched in 2019.<sup>15</sup> JSP 985 adopts a gender-sensitive approach to international security, defining human security as an approach to national and international security which places the emphasis on human beings, rather than the traditional focus on the security of the State. It covers seven cross cutting themes, of which WPS is one.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022: Annual report 2019.

<sup>14</sup> MOD, JSP 985 Human Security in Defence Volume 1: Incorporating Human Security in the Way We Operate.

<sup>15</sup> MOD, JSP 1325, Human Security in Military Operations, Part 1: Directive. January 2019.

<sup>16</sup> The seven cross cutting themes are 'Protection of Civilians (POC), Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC), Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT), Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE), Building Integrity and Countering Corruption (BI) and Cultural Property Protection (CPP).

### III. METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE OF EVALUATION

#### A. SCOPE

This evaluation serves two key purposes. The first is to increase transparency and effectiveness of NAP implementation and the engagement of the actors responsible for implementation. The second purpose is to learn from past implementation lessons in order to inform the development and strategic direction of the fifth UK NAP. The evaluation, therefore, has a forward-looking perspective and aims to provide new avenues for discussion about the UK's engagement with the broader WPS agenda.

The evaluation sought to answer five key evaluation questions:

1. *What has the impact of the NAP been?*
2. *How has it helped the UK deliver on improving the lives of women and girls in conflict-affected countries?*
3. *What are the successes and failures of the NAP and what lessons can we take into developing the next NAP?*
4. *What has been the domestic impact of the NAP particularly in terms of its impact on women's representation in armed forces and peacekeeping operations?*
5. *Should the next NAP include a stronger domestic focus as well as an international one?*

## B. METHODOLOGY

**Figure 9 - Methodology**



To respond to these questions, the evaluation drew from a mixed-methods approach, combining data collection and analysis through different research methods including a desk review of literature and documentation related to the UK NAP; stakeholders' interviews, and four in-depth case studies.

Data collection methods were designed to incorporate feminist principles in the data collection process. This was done through a transparent

and participatory process often involving FCDO and MOD staff both at HQ and the Mission level. The evaluation was framed in consultation with the Gender and Children in Conflict Team and Human Security Team and data collection tools were shared in advance to incorporate their feedback.

Even though the evaluation process has been undertaken in a participatory way, efforts were taken to ensure that evaluation results are based on findings that have undergone triangulation and cross-checking and were not influenced by any particular political or official lines of influence.

### **1. Document Review**

The document review included a review of policy instruments, annual reports and policy briefings relating to the NAP implementation and monitoring. These materials helped to assess the relevance and achievements of the UK's NAP at national, regional, and international levels. A range of examples is highlighted throughout the evaluation to illustrate the actions delivered by FCDO and MOD. *(See Annex 1 for the list of documents reviewed).*

**Figure 10 - Types of documents reviewed**



## **2. Interviews**

In total, we conducted interviews with 70 people for both the case studies and the overall report. For the general report, semi-structured interviews were held with a total of 18 government officials and 3 representatives from civil society. The total number of interviewees includes stakeholders who were unavailable to be interviewed virtually but provided written feedback.

For the selected case studies:

- In Jordan, interviews were conducted with 7 government staff, 8 civil society representatives, 1 UN Women staff and 1 representative from the Jordanian National Commission for Women.
- In Libya, interviews were conducted with 8 government staff, 6 implementing partners and 1 representative from civil society.
- In Mali, interviews were conducted with 6 government staff, 3 CSO representatives, 1 representative from the Malian Government and 1 from UNODC.
- For the UN space study, interviews were conducted with 5 government staff, 6 UN Staff and 1 CSO representative.

*(See Annex 2 for the interview guiding questions and Annex 3 for the list of case study questions).*

## **C. LIMITATIONS**

### **1. Availability of Stakeholders**

One challenge identified early in the process was that stakeholders recommended by the Gender and Children in Conflict Team and Human Security Team might lack the availability to engage in the evaluation. A number of key personnel who had been involved were no longer present and available for interviews, while their replacements did not always have full knowledge of the NAP. While efforts were undertaken to ensure contact, some relevant key actors were still not able to be interviewed.

### **2. Limited Contributions from MOD**

Generally, the MOD lens is limited both in the overall report and in the case studies. For the interviews for both the case studies and the overall report, the evaluation team experienced challenges and delays caused by difficulties getting timely responses from MOD staff to our interview requests, despite repeated efforts of our team and colleagues in London.

### **3. Duplication**

The recent report commissioned from FCDO to inform consultations for the fifth NAP, authored by Claire Howard, covers a lot of similar issues and concerns, and might have led to a sense of duplicating efforts focused on the current NAP. Therefore, in cooperation with the Gender and Children in Conflict Team, we sought to make this evaluation distinct and complementary to that report by only looking at the past four years and using case studies as a qualitative deep dive to reflect on experiences, lessons learned, and practices in much greater detail than other previous reports. Such in-depth perspectives will hopefully offer specific examples and insights of successes and challenges - combined with the HQ inputs - of lessons and opportunities that can inform the next NAP.

### **4. Challenges Associated with the Lack of a Standardized Monitoring Framework**

#### *a) Difficult to measure the impact of the NAP*

In evaluating impact, the team needed to assess the extent to which the NAP objectives contributed to the achievement of the seven strategic outcomes at all levels, and specifically examine what measurable changes have occurred for women and girls in conflict settings. However, due to the lack of an applied Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework within the UK NAP, and without a baseline and specific benchmarks and indicators, we cannot refer to empirical evidence of the impact of the NAP activities at the level of ultimate beneficiaries. Still, as the case studies will show, we can point to specific initiatives or programmatic approaches that

can be further analyzed to better elaborate an understanding of the key 'so what' questions which often seemed lacking at various levels of carrying out NAP mandates.

*b) Difficult to assess the efficiency of the NAP*

Because of the lack of clearly standardized monitoring of the NAP and difficulties to assess impact, it was hard to conduct an analysis of efficiency criteria for the implementation of this NAP both for stakeholders interviewed and for the evaluation team.

However, we were able to mitigate these challenges using the case studies as a qualitative deep dive to reflect on experiences, lessons learned and practices. Furthermore, in assessing the efficiency of the NAP, the team drew on their own experience with NAP implementation and insights gathered from the participation of some team members in the consultation process for the next NAP.

**5. FCDO and MOD Wide Survey**

It was originally envisioned that we would conduct an FCDO-MOD wide survey. However, as previous efforts to run surveys had been challenging given the low response rate, it was decided by the FCDO Gender and Children in Conflict Team and MOD Human Security team not to proceed with the survey. *(See Annex 4 for the draft survey).*



## IV. CASE STUDIES

### A. CASE STUDY - UK ENGAGEMENT IN THE UN SPACE

#### *1. Background and Context*

The UK actively utilises the UN space to promote the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda in line with the strategic objectives of its National Action Plan. This engagement happens at the centre, at country level (both in focus and non-focus countries), at the regional level and at the UN in New York and Geneva. The nature of this engagement, for example, can range from providing funding, to programming and humanitarian support, to diplomatic and political engagement, to peacekeeping.

#### *2. Impact and Effectiveness in Promoting the WPS Normative Framework*

One area where **there has been measurable impact from the UK NAP implementation in the UN space has been at the UN Security Council**. The UK Mission to the UN (UKMIS) has continued to push the agenda as the penholder on WPS at the Council. Their work is guided by the five priority objectives and two trial objectives in the UKMIS WPS Strategy, which aligns with specific NAP Strategic Objectives.

Despite what some consider to be a breakdown of relationships in the Permanent Five (P5), particularly during the U.S. Trump administration, and further recently confounded by the Ukraine crisis, the UKMIS has **managed to drive the agenda forward by securing more WPS references and stronger WPS language in Security Council products**.

In 2021, WPS references were included in 63 per cent of resolutions, 79 per cent of presidential statements and 68 per cent of decisions, all of which were more frequent than in 2020. This has been achieved in a difficult P5 landscape, with two States (China and Russia) serving as (increasingly active) obstructionists to the WPS agenda. On the other hand, France, the U.S., and the UK mostly agree on the agenda, but with differing priorities based on changing domestic political contexts. This highly politicized context plays out across all special political and peacekeeping missions.

Despite the challenges, the WPS normative framework is considered strong and, in fact, **most of the UKMIS efforts, beyond pushing for implementation, are now focused on maintaining the normative line of the existing WPS resolutions and consolidating the agenda**. One clear example of the UK's leadership in these efforts was during the negotiations of the draft WPS resolution led by Russia in 2020.

Alongside the strong advocacy efforts of civil society, the **UK managed to lead a coalition of ten cross-regional abstentions to the Russian resolution out of concern of a rollback of the agenda** on human rights and the protection of civil society.

Russia and China have become more coordinated in their efforts to either water down the agenda or redirect the focus away from a human rights-based framework. They are often considered to use the WPS agenda as a bargaining chip to advance other issues they consider of higher priority. In turn, **the UK has needed to respond by increasing coordination with likeminded Member States and new Council members, as well as to develop new allies** such as with the United Arab Emirates.

At times, **UKMIS advocacy and coordination to maintain and consolidate the agenda has even needed to target likeminded parties**. During the German-led negotiations of UNSCR 2467, there were a lot of discussions led by Germany and the UN Special Representative to the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, to develop a new mechanism in the Security Council on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) which would have been somewhat akin to the existing Informal Expert Group on WPS. The UK successfully worked closely with the U.S. and France, as well as with UN Women and other partners, to make it clear that this would be duplicative and would water down the approach to ensuring strong language in mandates which included CRSV.

The **UK's diplomatic efforts have also been effective in influencing new Council members to not introduce new WPS resolutions or even Presidential Statements, but rather find more creative ways to advance practical implementation of the agenda**. According to UKMIS, they must often manage and shape the enthusiasm of newly elected members, many of which now have WPS as a priority along with expectations from their capitals to make a significant contribution. One initiative that was launched by Ireland and Norway, which credited the influence of the UK, was to promote WPS shared commitments in the working methods of Council presidencies. This includes statements of intent under every Council member's presidency to mainstream WPS in everything they do; for example, to have women civil society briefers, to hold at least one big event on WPS, etc. This sets a good trend and provides extra pressure and visibility for driving change at the Council.

Interviewees from the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) credited the **political leadership of the UK as key to continuing to drive the agenda and keep it a P5 priority**, particularly in the complex context of the Ukraine crisis. They noted the **influence of the UK's leadership in various spaces, including in the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on WPS and in the Group of Friends of 1325**. The UK leads on coordination of the IEG, which brings together Special Envoys, Leads of UN Missions, heads of NGOs and civil society groups and provides a space for sharing of diverse perspectives on WPS. UN Women noted the importance of having the UK in

this supporting role of the IEG. A representative of civil society also noted the role the UK played in the establishment of the IEG and praised the UK and the IEG for ensuring that WPS is up front and center in the Council beyond just “WPS month” in October. The representative also noted the role of the UK in advocating for a reduction in military spending.

DPPA also recognized the UK’s **continued support for Arria-formula meetings on WPS issues**, such as a 2022 meeting on displaced Syrian women. They also commended the UK’s recent actions **to deploy a team to investigate war crimes in Ukraine, including sexual violence**. One interviewee from the **UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO) also highlighted the importance of the political leadership of the UK and noted the mutual benefits of their relationship**, which includes advancing similar views and priorities, information sharing beneficial to the UK for their negotiations and dual strategy development. This DPO representative noted that they have seen **improved language on WPS for peacekeeping missions** since 2017/2018 in many mandates that goes beyond just gender mainstreaming to being more nuanced and including prioritized tasks rather than just a last paragraph in a mission mandate. The **establishment of specific WPS benchmarks in country-specific resolutions** was also noted as a UK achievement, such as those included in the Mali mandate, which has made a real difference on the ground.

The **UK’s timely and strategic organization of high-level events was also credited as significant in advancing WPS in mandate renewals**, such as the MINUSMA event *“From Mandate to Mission: Real Life Implementation of the WPS Agenda in Mali”* (co-hosted with DPO, Norway, France, and Mali). This event was held around the timing of the MINUSMA mandate renewal in May 2021 and featured the highest-ever number of women civil society representatives from a country on the Council’s agenda in an ambassador-level meeting. The ultimate objective was achieved in that stronger WPS language was secured in MINUSMA’s mandate.

The UK is perceived as **following up on mandate language to evaluate what it means in terms of implementation. They are also seen as creating spaces for women leaders and CSOs**. UN Women also spoke positively of the role that Lord Hague and Lord Ahmad have played in advancing WPS regardless of the profile of the UK Government in London.

Furthermore, the UK was credited by both DPO and DPPA as **playing an active role in trying to suggest a more elaborated WPS language in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C34)**. The UK recommendations on WPS were considered in line with the thinking and priorities of the Secretariat and the proposals were believed to be effective and useful in advancing women in peacekeeping. One interviewee from the C34 Secretariat pointed out that the UK always calls attention to the resource implications of proposed recommendations in C34 negotiations.

*“Member States sometimes recommend actions that for us would be difficult to take without additional resources, either human or financial, so it is really useful to see a Member State flag this challenge in the negotiations.”*

The **UK also promotes the WPS agenda in Geneva, primarily at the Human Rights Council (HRC)**; however, with very limited funding. Similar to New York, the UK Mission in Geneva is responsible for upholding norms. They take on many country-specific mandates (i.e., Syria, Myanmar) and thematic gender resolutions (i.e., education). They also work with the Special Envoy for Syria and support his efforts to ensure women are at the table. The UK has also partnered with the UAE on a successful resolution on education and political participation and found an entry point to push progress on WPS, as the UAE is also very supportive of women being at the table of the Syria peace talks.

Where the UK is the penholder, **they work to not give away any concessions on gender equality and women’s empowerment and they try to advance the key tenants of the NAP, but the work is more nuanced.** Many of the same political challenges and obstructionist efforts faced by UKMIS in New York are encountered in Geneva at the HRC. The Canadians tried to introduce a resolution on WPS at the HRC two years ago and the UK and France were placed in a rather difficult position, as they themselves had concerns of the WPS agenda being distracted or splintered from New York. Russia has been deeply against any WPS resolution at the HRC and has tried to roll back anything related to WPS. There are therefore **real sensitivities from a risk perspective to pushing the WPS agenda in the HRC.**

These **same sensitivities and risks concerning the introduction of any WPS issue into negotiations** were also described by an interviewee who works with the **UN General Assembly (GA)** Third Committee processes, including the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). She described how the Africa Group could not agree on the mere mention of the WPS agenda in 2022 CSW negotiations, for example, and described it as being seen as immediately contentious and controversial in other negotiations in the GA. It is also now characterized by Russia as a ‘Western framework.’

### **3. Impact and Effectiveness in Promoting the WPS Agenda in UN Peacekeeping**

The UN Peacekeeping Joint Unit (UNPKJU) at the MOD and FCDO is guided by the NAP, particularly its Strategic Outcome on peacekeeping. They work actively to include WPS in peacekeeping mandates and use the NAP domestically to increase a focus on gender integration within the MOD.

**The UK has successfully engaged with the UN and other regional actors such as the African Union, African Standby Force and troop and police contributing**

**countries to enhance capabilities and improve performance through the British Peace Support Team (Africa) BPST(A)**, which includes a key component on gender and human security. In 2021, BPST(A) delivered bespoke gender trainings on Gender in PSOs; CRSV; Child Protection; Protection of Refugees and IDPs; Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Victim-Centred Investigations; and Protection of Civilians. BPST(A) further integrated gender into Pre-Deployment and other training programmes, reaching an additional 3583 peacekeepers, who now have basic gender awareness and a common understanding of core values in UN/AU missions regarding sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and CRSV.

In terms of **reviewing their work on WPS at the mission-level and informing relevant UN negotiations such as mandate renewals, the UNPKJU employs the Strategic Mission Assessment Tool (SMAT)**, sometimes in conjunction with other Security Council members. The SMAT entails a series of interviews, including with the gender advisors, to better understand the mission's mandate, leadership, and delivery (including from a gender lens) as it relates to each component to better identify the gaps and advocate for effective responses. However, this is the **only accountability mechanism in place**.

#### ***4. Impact and Effectiveness of UK Funding to Promote the WPS Agenda***

The **UK is a big investor in the UNSG's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)**, contributing £10 million in 2021. The PBF has been consistently exceeding its target of 30 per cent of investments targeted for gender equality and women's empowerment and reached 47 per cent in 2021. **The PBF is viewed as one of the vehicles the UK can shape as a major donor to support WPS.** The UK also serves as Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of the PBF along with Sweden. According to a civil society representative, the **UK was also one of the first funders of the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund** and noted that their early support made a lot of difference in encouraging other States to invest in a promising idea.

The UKMIS has also funded smaller scale projects, including through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) and the International Peacemakers' Fund (IPF), that have generally aimed to shape the work of the UN agencies, funds, and programmes to ensure the UN system is investing more in WPS. One funding initiative that has proven effective has been an 18-month **project with OHCHR on preventing reprisals against women civil society leaders who brief** the Security Council. The issue of reprisals against briefers has been a big gap at the SC with no institutional protection practices in place or any type of data protection. In addition to serious cyber risks, there are in-country risks for briefers.

This project far surpassed the original objective which was to increase the capacity of Council members to prevent and deal effectively with reprisals against briefers. The

project ended up **training over 300 field staff** from across UN agencies, mandates, and missions. A **UN endorsed OHCHR Good Practice Guidelines for Member States and Council members was also published on mitigating reprisals against civil society briefers**. Many Member States are using the guidelines in practice and the UK promoted them in April 2022 during their SC presidency and plans to continue to socialize them.

Additionally, a consultant was hired through the project to serve as a civil society briefers liaison for all CSO briefers to the Council. This had a massive impact in supporting briefers, as the liaison was able to do comprehensive risk assessments so States could be aware of high risks. Furthermore, **75 per cent of the briefers received the training and there were four to five reprisals cases** during this time. The project also offered a chance for reprisal focal points in missions to be more proactive and increase their capacities to work with their mission to ensure the necessary steps and the informed consent of the briever, which is in line with their survivor-centered approach to CRSV.

**The UK has emerged as a leader on the reprisals issue in the SC and beyond** and would like to continue this work. In addition to having a real influence on other Member States, it has been a way to continue to ensure the Council hears quality and honest input from women civil society briefers and to ensure a more diverse and inclusive approach to how the Council thinks through security issues.

This is also an example of the **impact of a UKMIS WPS initiative that goes beyond funding**, with multiple events and awareness-raising activities. The UK started a core group of likeminded States to support new Member States to the SC in their efforts to bring briefers to the Council, many of whom are women. The UK also held a couple of Arria-formula meetings, such as in February 2020 with the Dominican Republic, which was the first time this issue was brought to the Council. As a result, Norway hosted the first formal Council meeting in the form of an open debate in January 2022 on the issue of reprisals against WHRD and women peacebuilders during their presidency and gave the UK a lot of credit for their influential initiatives.

The work of the project also played out at the CRSV open debate signature event which featured three women civil society briefers from across the major priority countries (Iraq, Syria, and Ethiopia). This was the first time an Ethiopian CSO representative (Ethiopian woman and leader of a youth movement) briefed the Council.

The Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations is another example not only of the financial contributions of the UK, **but their valued role as a strategic advisor and technical expert for the advancement of WPS within the UN space**. The UK has contributed substantially to the Elsie Fund (£1.2 million was

committed in 2022). **Through their strategic funding, the UK is demonstrating their confidence in the Fund and that it is having an impact.** One interviewee from DPO-DPPA also **commended the UK's substantive contributions in meetings of the Fund's Steering Committee.** She noted that the remarks of the UK are always constructive and stress that the Fund should prioritize proposals from troop and police contributing countries that are already deploying women due to the lengthy time process required for non-approved countries, which is a helpful point for the Fund.

An interviewee from UN Women also expressed appreciation for the interest shown by the UK in how the Fund is meeting its objectives and outcomes/outputs and described how the UK **meets with UN Women at least twice a year outside the donor agreement for solid discussions on progress.** They were also grateful for the **technical guidance provided by the UK through the publication of their NAP guidance notes,** particularly on Implementing Strategic Outcome 2: Peacekeeping. She also noted the strategic advice and guidance offered by the UK on monitoring implementation, as well as the substantive feedback provided on proposals reviewed as part of their role in the Elsie Fund Technical Committee.

While the PKJU does not have funding directly allocated to the NAP, they do have WPS as part of their strategic framework and it is from here that they fund the Elsie Initiative. One interviewee described that this reinforces their decision to use WPS as a funding priority. However, another interviewee from the PKJU noted that they are **unaware of the outcomes of the Elsie Initiative and that more communication is needed.**

The **UKMIS also provided small funding (IPF) to the Urgent Action Fund to offer grants to at-risk women peacebuilders** to enable them to apply for rapid disbursements to pay for necessary emergency lodging or travel. Even though this funding ended in March 2021, the UKMIS want to provide more support to local NGOs that work with women on the ground rather than through the UN or embassies.

### ***5. WPS Approaches of the UN and NATO – Greater Integration Required***

In terms of the extent to which the UN and NATO are employing an integrated approach to WPS to achieve greater impact, most of those interviewed expressed that much more could be done. The **most practical activity would be an increase in sharing of good practices and lessons learned.** An interviewee from DPO mentioned that they have a partnership with NATO which includes a focus on WPS, and that they have mostly focused on sharing lessons around working on data on women in peacekeeping. They noted that NATO had also requested support from them on integrating gender into military operations. A JPKU interviewee noted that NATO often takes primacy in the UK in terms of a lot of political decisions and strategies and **that it would be helpful if NATO targets around improving gender parity for**

**uniformed personnel could be shared and better reflected in NATO Policy.** Work on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse was also viewed as a critical area for potential collaboration. The UK is part of the leading group of Allies pushing for change and funding development of a policy on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. In 2018, the UK funded the position and deployed a senior policy advisor to support the development of NATO's first SEA and CRSV policies.<sup>17</sup>

Most respondents expressed a **desire for greater integration of the work of the UN and NATO but noted that so far this has not materialized in a consistent or coordinated way.** Some referred to the NATO Office in New York and their UN Focal Point with whom UKMIS links up in terms of the delegations and who engages on issues like CRSV and refugee women and children from Ukraine, but that this coordination does not happen often. UKMIS also mentioned that NATO members on the Security Council sometimes invite NATO representatives to speak at the Council as they did for the 2021 WPS Open Debate on WPS to explain what they are doing. Yet in Geneva, NATO was not seen to engage in multilateral negotiations on WPS.

One interviewee believed that the **UN and NATO were more coordinated six or seven years ago** (2009-2016), and that the cooperation decreased in the years since. There was a suggestion that the UKMIS could do a mapping of areas of potential overlap to identify future opportunities. It was also stressed that there is a role for the UN to play in getting NATO more involved on WPS issues. One main challenge noted was that, in general, there **remains a real lack of understanding amongst senior leadership in Member States and in the UN on how to deliver on the implementation gap in the WPS agenda.**

## **6. Remaining Challenges and Gaps**

### *a) Advancing the normative framework*

Some feel that we are at a ceiling in terms of innovative ideas and language to advance the normative framework and that the focus should really be on the implementation gap. The fact that the Security Council cannot enforce its WPS resolutions was also raised as an ongoing challenge. While the trend in the last few decades was timid progress on WPS, we are now seeing clear reversals in many countries (Afghanistan, Mali, Myanmar, Ukraine). One respondent noted that the Ukraine crisis has also further challenged the credibility of the UN Security Council.

There was also criticism of the UK for their **perceived lack of leadership in advocating for the nomination of a woman candidate for the position (or re-election) of UN Secretary-General.** Considering that the first step in the nomination process is in the

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<sup>17</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022: Annual report 2018



Council, the UK, as a member of the P5, could have been more active in leading conversations on how to support women candidates, especially as WPS penholder. It was also suggested that the UK could be more vocal on the crisis in Myanmar and endorse them to the International Criminal Court, especially considering the violations of women's human rights.

#### *b) Peacekeeping*

One important observation related to the challenges and gaps in the UK's engagement in UN peacekeeping is that the **NAP has not been mainstreamed into the day-to-day activities of the JPKU, nor has it been integrated into their internal theory of change**, which affect their abilities to implement the NAP in an effective way. This may also be a contributing factor to the **UK's domestic challenges in implementing the WPS agenda, particularly in increasing women's participation in the security sector**.

*As one respondent noted: "We work across MOD and FCDO, but it feels like that we are still having the same conversations about gender barriers and what are the reasons we do not have more women in our own deployments. It is challenging and it is super slow and there has been almost no progress despite senior buy-in. The Chief of Defence staff and others seem on board, but it does not seem that it trickles down; like it is not clear across the Military that this is something that we really want to do. We do not need a gender barrier study. We already know quite a lot about the challenges."*

#### *c) Funding*

Some interviewees noted that the UK **(DFID) used to be the main funder of the WPS agenda and the Scandinavians, particularly Sweden, supplanted that role** when DFID changed their focus to the prevention of sexual violence. Others described a funding de-prioritization of WPS by the Nordic countries and the UK, citing that Swedish aid had dropped by 25 per cent because of diversion of funds for the Ukraine crisis. One suggestion was that it would be useful to evaluate the impact of the Ukraine crisis on funding for WPS in general.

One interviewee also noted the **decrease in funding over the years for civil society** working on WPS. They explained that the UK had always been amongst the top three favored donors due to the simplicity of their processes (from application to reporting) and their proclivity for multi-year funding which allowed for continuity and sustainability of efforts, in addition to the opportunity to diversify their funding base. However, in recent years, the funding processes have become a lot more complicated, particularly the CSSF stream for WPS. CSOs were described as feeling more like consultants or service providers working with a pre-established donor agenda, not a

locally driven agenda responding to local needs. The pay upon approved deliverable with no initial installment to conduct the work was also viewed as limiting the types of CSOs that can apply (i.e., organizations that can afford to front costs for workshops, research etc.).

None of those interviewed seemed to be aware that the UK previously provided funding for the Gender Advisors in the UNSG's Office and were **confused as to why the position of Senior Gender Advisor was abolished** in UNSG Guterres' second term, as it was considered very important. UKMIS also noted the funding cuts to UN Women for WPS programming as unfortunate.

While the partnership with OHCHR on reprisals was deemed extremely effective, the funding for this project was cut along with the 2020-2021 funding cuts to the other UKMIS projects. One interviewee felt that beyond programme funding, **investments are needed to increase the general capacities of OHCHR**, as they have very little staff dedicated to working on reprisals and they get continual requests for support from CSO briefers.

Funding cuts were also mentioned by the DPO Gender Unit, which was funded by the UK up until 2018. Important work was produced as a result of this funding, including the production of the capacity-building resource packet and the initiation of work around accountability with the development of indicators to monitor progress on WPS. The DPO Gender Unit is heavily dependent on the regular budget to support colleagues with capacity-building, and all the additional advocacy and training and high-level events come from extrabudgetary funding. **DPO will therefore need additional funding to implement the mandates that the UK worked so hard to pass.**

#### *d) NAP focus country model*

The NAP focus country model was described as mostly unhelpful by respondents for this UN case study. For the JPKU, this model does not apply to how they operate, and deployment is not driven much by the NAP. Peacekeeping missions do not change as often, and it is only in the DRC where there is potential overlap. In terms of work at the Security Council, there is a Council agenda that addresses the most active crises and pressing security issues. The UKMIS is expected to respond to whatever is raised in the Council, but their work is hindered when the capacity and understanding in Capital is limited due to a lack of focus and expertise beyond the focus countries. The focus country model does not inform the path forward on WPS at the UN or where the UK should engage in New York and Geneva. Furthermore, some countries may not be a priority for the UK, but they may be priorities for their allies; for example, the situation in Haiti is of high risk and fragile, particularly for women, but this does not align with the UK NAP.

## **7. *Select Recommendations***

- Focus on advocating for implementation; there are sufficient effective implementation models (including on localization).
- Include strategic guidance in the next NAP on how to mainstream WPS across the work of the mission at the UN outside of the Security Council to address the backlash against the WPS agenda in negotiations.
- Find the synergies between what the UK wants to advocate for on WPS and CRSV and develop red lines (like there are for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)) for negotiations on WPS at the Human Rights Council.
- Provide the UKMIS in Geneva with a mandate and concrete recommendations to push for in Universal Periodic Review sessions, particularly for NAP focus countries.
- Support the synergy between WPS resolutions and CEDAW; almost all Member States are signatories of CEDAW which can be a real accountability mechanism on WPS.
- Revisit the current monitoring and evaluation system to better capture the achievements of the UKMIS at the UN in advancing the WPS agenda.

## B. CASE STUDY - UK ENGAGEMENT IN LIBYA

### 1. *Background and Context*

Libya is a highly patriarchal society, where women have traditionally not played a very visible role in public life and have been generally excluded from political and peace processes. The **overall situation for women and girls in Libya has regressed significantly** in the last several years, a result of an overall worsening in the political and security environment, a shrinking of civil society space due to increased governmental restrictions and repression<sup>18</sup>, as well as a specific regression in women's rights and the space for discussion of gender issues more broadly.

Political divisions and the overall security environment play a further barrier in women's participation, rendering them vulnerable to verbal and physical attacks for their participation in public life. Since 2011, **women involved in political and human rights spaces have faced systematic threats, from cyber bullying and reputational attacks to abductions and assassinations**. This has recently included the abduction of the MP Siham Sergiwa in July 2019, as well as the assassination of the activist Hanan Al-Barassi in November 2020.<sup>19</sup>

In interviews, activists and international actors report a **“new phase of persecution” of civil society activists**, including the weaponization of these activists against the presence of the international community, which makes international efforts to support Libyan civil society – particularly on WPS issues – complicated. This has been exacerbated by the recent attempts to establish a Libyan National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions on women, peace, and security. According to local activists, any mention of equality, NAPs or gender issues leads to accusations of a foreign agenda that seeks to subvert Sharia law. This has created a difficult situation for both women peacebuilders and international actors wanting to support them, namely **how can international actors best support Libyan women when any association with international actors could put Libyan women under threat**.

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<sup>18</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Libya: Draconian Decree Would Restrict Civic Groups,” 4 June 2021. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/04/libya-draconian-decree-would-restrict-civic-groups>.

<sup>19</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022: Annual report 2020.

## 2. Impact and Effectiveness

### *a) General impact of UK NAP on Libyan women and girls*

The UK's cross-government Libya Gender Strategy—which is derived from the UK NAP on WPS and UNSCR 1325—aims to address these multifaceted issues affecting Libyan women.<sup>20</sup> Considering that Libya was designated as a NAP 'focus country', staff noted that the presence of the NAP gave the UK representatives in Libya extra credibility when pushing WPS messages in the policy sphere.

During interviews, some **UK staff expressed some confusion around the implications of being a NAP focus country.** Some of the staff from the British Embassy in Tripoli felt that this focus country status should translate into access to a larger budget to adequately work on WPS issues in Libya. They noted that the 'focus country' category had raised expectations without providing adequate resources to meet them. However, other UK staff reported that having Libya designated as a 'focus country' has put positive pressure on the Embassy to work on WPS issues in a context where it would have been very easy to sideline these issues due to the complexities of the context.

Relatedly, it is evident through interviews with UK staff that **there remains a lack of consensus within the British Embassy in Tripoli around the value of focusing on WPS issues in Libya.** While some UK staff understood the importance of addressing WPS issues, others felt that the context was too difficult and the challenges too great, and thus WPS should not be a priority for the UK's strategy in Libya. Given this lack of internal buy-in, Libya's 'focus country' status has helped those within the UK Government who are advocating for a greater focus on WPS issues to keep these issues on the table. It has also meant that many projects have taken on a WPS lens where they might not have had one otherwise.

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<sup>20</sup>UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022: Annual report 2019.

## **Case Study of the Failure of the Development of the Libyan NAP on WPS**

While the UK was not directly involved in the development of the Libyan National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, the failed development of the Libyan NAP contains some important lessons that are worth highlighting for future work. Developed with support from the Governments of Finland and Norway and led by UN Women alongside the Ministry of Women's Affairs of the UN-backed interim government, the launch of the Libyan NAP in 2021 led to an intense backlash by conservative religious groups in Libya, including 800 women who signed a petition to cancel the agreement due to perceptions that the NAP violates Sharia law. This led to the temporary suspension of the MOU developed between UN Women and the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

There are three main reasons that can be attributed to the failure of the Libyan NAP, which are important to consider in developing future work on WPS issues in Libya. The first reason was a need for a more nuanced understanding of the current political environment and the potential for the NAP to become an easy sacrifice. Secondly, the development of the Libyan NAP was done without enough consultation or engagement with local women's rights activists, different sectors of the UN-backed interim government, or the international community. This also includes the need for engagement with more conservative elements within the country, such as the Fatwa House (which was responsible for leading the charge against the Libyan NAP). Finally, not enough awareness-raising was done prior to the launch of the roadmap, including to address reservations or misunderstandings existing around the issues (including the differences between UNSCR 1325 and the more controversial CEDAW), as well as the value and importance of WPS issues. The result was a backlash against the Libyan NAP and the defaming of UNSCR 1325, which has led to a worsening situation for Libyan women activists and the ability of both local and international actors to work on WPS issues in Libya.

### *b) Effectiveness of UK engagement with UNSMIL on women's participation in the peace process*

Over the last several years, the UK has regularly pushed for the “full, equal and meaningful participation” of women in peace and political processes<sup>21</sup> with UNSMIL

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<sup>21</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022: Annual report 2020.

and others, mostly through diplomatic statements and lobbying; though some within HMG admitted that this was not done as consistently as it could have been. This advocacy has also been done by senior and high-profile figures, such as Her Royal Highness The Countess of Wessex during her virtual visit to Libya in October 2020.<sup>22</sup> According to some UK staff, **UK advocacy has contributed towards some tangible improvements in women's participation**, including securing a parallel civil society track for women civil society leaders in the Palermo peace talks, a Women's Empowerment Unit in the Presidency Council in November 2018<sup>23</sup>, and an agreement by Libyan delegates in November 2020 that women would comprise at least 30 per cent of senior positions in a future unity government.<sup>24</sup>

However, **during the three-track structure of the intra-Libyan Berlin conference negotiations, women's involvement remained somewhat limited**. According to a female Libyan activist involved in the negotiations, women were largely absent from the military/security track, nor were there side meetings that engaged women. Given that it was here that issues such as **freedom of movement, the opening of the coastal roads between cities, and hate speech and cyber violence were discussed, the lack of a gender lens or women's perspectives is critical**.

There were slightly more women participating in the economic track, though this remained limited to approximately five per cent of the delegation. However, as an activist noted, the engagement of most of the women took place *after* the economic roadmap and priorities had already been produced and identified, and **thus women remained largely absent when it came to identifying these priorities**.

There was more success in the political track, where approximately 22 per cent of participants **(17 out of 75 members) of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) were women**. The LPDF was a key focus for the UK's advocacy, with the UK pushing for women's inclusion in various capacities, including at the ambassadorial level. Thus, it can be said that the UK's advocacy played a significant role in the increased number of women participating in this track.

This is certainly a success, particularly for a context such as Libya. However, it is worth noting that these **numbers do not reveal some of the qualitative aspects of women's participation**. For example, most of the 17 women involved were not part of the formal delegations, and instead formed a so-called 'Independent bloc.' Prior to the LPDF process, consultation meetings were held with more than 100 women to produce key recommendations and priorities that would then be represented by this 'independent bloc'. However, concerns were raised that the bloc did not adequately

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<sup>22</sup>UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022: Annual report 2020.

<sup>23</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022: Annual report 2018.

<sup>24</sup>UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022: Annual report 2020.

represent these recommendations, partly due to the alleged political affiliations of members of the independent bloc. Some felt that women were not accepted as legitimate members by the LPDF. Finally, the entire UN-led peace process has not been regarded as successful, and because of this there has not been much impact to women's involvement in the process, nor has there been much that the UK can lobby for when it comes to involving women.

Nonetheless, **this inclusion had a knock-on effect, as it was pressure from the LPDF women members and civil society groups** that secured guarantees from Prime Minister Abdul Hamid al-Dbeibeh to appoint five women to his cabinet (two of which hold key positions in the Ministry of Justice and the Foreign Ministry), even though this represented only 14 per cent rather than the initial 30 per cent target.<sup>25</sup> While modest, this is seen as a victory in the Libyan context where the benchmark for women's participation is very low.

There was a perception from both UK staff, partners, and local activists that **UNSMIL could be doing more to ensure greater women's roles in peace processes**. Deputy Head of UNSMIL Stephanie Williams served as a good role model for women's participation and was open to the importance of including women; however, the common perception is that UNSMIL's approach is more quantitative than qualitative (i.e., focusing on numbers of women at the table rather than more qualitative attributes of meaningful participation). This view was echoed by some women activists who felt that UNSMIL **prioritised simplistic understandings of 'inclusivity' as opposed to qualitative input and analysis from women with specific expertise on the issues**. According to NGOs and some local activists, this approach was contrasted by the UK's more sophisticated approach to women's participation, which was seen as more "analysis-driven" and with a clearer strategy on how to connect different tracks of the peace process. Additionally, there is consensus from civil society and partners interviewed that **the UK has taken a conflict-sensitive approach to women's participation, which considers the complex and sensitive environment and the risks posed to women who are publicly active**.

An issue raised by some local partners, and one worth engaging with for future policy and programming, is the question of what constitutes 'meaningful' participation of women, and whether this requires addressing the underlying structural challenges preventing women from participating, beyond looking at numbers of women at the table. There is a perception among some local partners that the international community remains overly focused on the number of seats at the table, or what one activist referred to as "an obsession with women's participation," without a proper

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<sup>25</sup> Peaceful Change initiative, "Integrating Gender into community-level peacebuilding: Lessons from Libya," 16 May 2022.



intersectional assessment of the wider environment and whether this participation has tangibly improved the lives of women in Libya.

For example, **while there has been some improvement in terms of numbers, it is unclear whether this has translated to a material improvement in the lives of women and girls.** Women activists interviewed have pointed to the fact that despite the larger presence of women in Parliament, the environment has become more restrictive when it comes to talking about gender issues, and there has been an overall regression in women's situation in Libya.

Partners pointed to the need to look at structural and intersectional barriers to inclusion, and to do more work on men's attitudes and behaviours to ensure that there is an enabling environment that supports the meaningful participation of women. While not discounting the tangible benefits that greater numbers of women participating in political and peace processes have on the lives of women, even if small, these concerns are worth considering developing a more well-rounded strategy for improving women's engagement in these processes.

As it relates to future lobbying of women's inclusion in peacemaking, **a key activity would be for the UK to develop and more clearly outline with UNSMIL both a strategy and a roadmap to support greater women's participation in the (eventual) peace process and establish key indicators and frameworks that can allow for monitoring progress on this issue.** Staff noted that the UK must invest more resources to approach the challenge of participation in a deeper and more meaningful way that is not "tokenistic," perhaps including repeated incentives for the UN-backed interim Government.

On the programmatic side, the UK has supported partners working at the local level in peacebuilding processes, including **training, supporting, and empowering female peace mediators to promote local reconciliation throughout the country.** While not directly linked to women's participation in peace processes, the UK has also provided ongoing support to civil society groups to advance women's political participation and economic inclusion, including supporting female entrepreneurs, and the creation of a national database of female experts in a number of fields including politics, law, human rights and health care, on which the international community and the UN-backed interim government can draw.<sup>26</sup> However, there is not much evidence presented on what impact this may have had on supporting women's participation at the national level. UK staff pointed out that **more can be done to link the activities conducted at the programmatic level to the higher-level peace and political processes at the level of policy.** Additionally, beyond capacity-building, more work

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<sup>26</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022: Annual report 2019.

can be done to improve the overall environment that would support and enable women's participation, including collaborating more closely with communities, and particularly with men, to improve awareness and sensitisation.

*c) Approaching issues of protection for women peacebuilders*

Regarding the protection of women peacebuilders, interviews with UK staff, women activists and partners have shown that most of **the UK's work on this issue has been limited to public statements and private lobbying**. The UK has made several statements underscoring the need for protection of women activists and peacebuilders in Libya at the UN Security Council, the G7 and in other high-level policy circles. However, there has been little programmatic intervention to address the underlying causes of protection threats facing women peacebuilders.

On the positive side, UK staff presented evidence that **the UK Government in Libya is generally seen as a trustworthy international partner that can provide protection to women and gender minorities who are facing threats**. Staff pointed to specific incidents where the British Embassy was contacted by activists facing threats to their safety; however, UK responses to these threats have been individual rather than systematic.

The UK was perceived by local partners and activists as being more aware of the protection threats facing women in this space compared to other international actors such as UN Women and UNSMIL.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, **the UK has been engaged in discreet programmatic activities to better understand and address threats facing women**, including monitoring hate speech and online violence against politically engaged women, as well as work to counter disinformation. Additionally, the UK dedicated a small pool of funds to create a 'protection fund' for human rights defenders and activists. Overall, however, UK staff pointed to **budget limitations** and the lack of funding due to ODA cuts that prevented further work or programming on the issue of protection.

Women activists pointed to the need for more to be done to understand **the source and nature of the threats against women and address their underlying causes**. Additionally, it is important to hold accountable perpetrators of threats against women, though activists also acknowledged the difficulty of doing so in the current Libyan context of the ineffectiveness of national level security and justice mechanisms.

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<sup>27</sup> For example, local partners and women activists noted an example where activities and social media posts by UNSMIL were accompanied by words now regarded as controversial in the Libyan context (such as 'equality'). This illustrates the challenge of addressing WPS issues in a context where the space to speak on these issues is rapidly shrinking, and the need for greater conflict sensitivity on the part of international actors to protect women peacebuilders and activists and encourage others to participate.

Finally, more can be done to counter misperceptions and conspiracy theories around WPS issues and the NAP process, including utilising an Islamic perspective on WPS issues, and educating politicians and media on the differences between key WPS processes such as the NAP and CEDAW.

### **3. Coordination and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning**

#### *a) Mainstreaming of the NAP and WPS within the Embassy*

Of the seven strategic outcomes in the UK NAP, the UK is only delivering against three in Libya: SO1 on decision-making, SO3 on GBV, and SO4 on humanitarian response. The British Embassy in Tripoli also reported utilising the guidelines on how to mainstream gender in preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE) activities. However, some **staff noted that they do not refer to the UK NAP in their regular work**, and definitely do not use it as a lobbying or policy tool.

On the programmatic side of the British Embassy, **gender is a cross-cutting theme in design, planning and reporting**, and implementing partners are required to ensure gender equality in their projects and provide evidence of such. This could be at least partially attributed to the UK NAP and Libya's designation as a 'focus country.' For example, in a UK-funded programme implemented by Dan Church Aid, an all-female risk education team was created in Sirte, partly at the request of the UK, which had benefits in improving access to education in certain households and for school-aged girls.

#### *b) Resourcing*

UK staff reported feeling **under-resourced and stretched, particularly following the ODA budget cuts**, which led to several key positions being cut from the team. There is a perception among staff in the Embassy that, given Libya's role as a focus country in the UK NAP, greater financial and technical support should be dedicated to adequately resourcing the Embassy to understand and tackle the complex WPS challenges. This includes sufficient specialist staff who can dedicate their time on the context, including on the policy side of the mission's work. According to one staff member, *"ambition does not match the resources allocated."*

In terms of CSSF funding, the mission is mandated to have a 15 per cent spend on gender and WPS issues, and this has helped prioritise WPS issues in programming. At the level of policy, there is an ardent desire among staff for more resources and expertise to help "think through" what can be done to overcome challenges, including support on how to translate the prioritisation of the NAP. A need was also expressed for lessons and experiences from other contexts on ways to champion women in peace processes. Staff reported feeling that they did not have enough time or

resources to effectively dedicate towards working on WPS issues in-country, and that several other competing priorities has meant that NAP-related activities are not often prioritised. In the policy realm, WPS issues were also considered to be of lower priority compared to other competing issues and the need to respond to the complex dynamics on the ground. In the absence of time and expertise, staff reported often resorting to the most straight-forward metric for achieving NAP goals (for example, in the case of participation, looking solely at seats at the table), which may not ultimately produce the impact required.

Staff reported receiving support from London, including from regional advisors and the Office for Conflict, Stabilisation and Mediation (OCSM), and found these resources helpful, including the support provided by a regional gender advisor. However, there was a sense that **the challenges of the context required more dedicated support to produce impact**. Additionally, staff reported a desire for greater thematic expertise to navigate key policy challenges in the context. Staff pointed out that greater resources do not necessarily mean bigger budgets, but rather **time and intellectual capital**, ensuring that qualified and experienced staff have dedicated time to think through the sensitive topics and outline clear and evidence-based theories of change that can tackle the 'how' question when it comes to pursuing the challenges of participation and prevention.

#### *c) Coordination around WPS issues in-country*

At the level of coordination with local partners, the UK has regular contact with local activists and partners on the programming side of the mission, and high-level figures have also conducted consultations with women activists on priority issues such as participation and protection. However, staff in London reported that **there was not enough engagement with civil society in-country** to closely monitor dynamics on the ground (though it is unclear whether this is an issue with local engagement or internal reporting processes or both).

At the level of international coordination on WPS issues, **the UK does not coordinate with other international actors on WPS issues in the sphere of defence**. In the political sphere, the UK engages informally in some of the coordination groups for donors and international actors, as well as with elements of UNSMIL and UN Women.

Following consultations with the international community, one of the key findings on WPS policy and programming in Libya revolved around **the lack of efficient coordination between members of the international community in Libya**. While coordination groups exist, there is consensus that these groups do not function effectively and efficiently. Given that the UK is a penholder on Libya and UNSCR 1325 at the UN, its reputation in-country as an effective partner on WPS issues, and the deeper engagement the UK has in the political process compared to other gender-

focused international actors, **the UK is potentially very well-placed to play a greater coordination role on WPS issues in Libya**. While there is a key added value and potential for significant impact on this issue, staff noted the need for a real investment in resources to maximise the opportunity to take a lead in much needed coordination around WPS issues.

#### *d) Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning*

Embassy staff reported feeling that Libya's position as a 'focus country' for the NAP has meant added requests from already pressured in-country staff to report on progress on the NAP. This is particularly the case during high-profile ministerial visits, and **staff in-country observed that reporting often feels like an extractive process**, as requests from London come in and there is often no follow-up once the information has been sent. Staff also reported that the same piece of information can be requested from different departments, and that monthly calls with in-country WPS focal points would be a useful way to avoid such duplication. Additionally, staff in-country reported that occasionally essential information is conveyed through forums and distribution lists that are not accessible to all staff (particularly national staff), such as diplomatic telegrams. This has meant that **sometimes key WPS focal points are not aware of requests for information or reporting deadlines**. A specific WPS-focused distribution list would serve to address such communication issues.

In terms of tools, staff in-country reported duplications and repetitions when reporting on the NAP reporting matrix, though they cited some recent improvements. While GAPS have requested more statistics and data on UK's programming in Libya<sup>28</sup>, staff noted that **a challenge in reporting on WPS issues in Libya is the sensitivity around sharing information and affiliations with local activists, given the potential protection threats Libyan women face** for being seen to work on WPS issues and to cooperate with international actors. Thus, some key achievements in Libya cannot be submitted or reported either to UK Parliament or the public.

#### **4. Enabling Factors and Persistent Challenges**

There remains **strong resistance to working on WPS issues** in Libya, and very little buy-in within the UN-backed interim government, including among those who are not hostile to the idea. Even within the international community, the perception in some circles remains that WPS issues are not a priority, and there has been little investment in resources to work on this at the policy level. This **resistance exists within the UK mission itself**. Staff working on WPS issues across HMG reported some resistance from (particularly male) colleagues within the UK Government on key WPS issues in Libya who argued that the context is either too complex or else **"it is not the**

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<sup>28</sup> GAPS, "Assessing UK Government Action on Women, Peace, and Security in 2019".

**right time.”** Among those who push forward this argument, their rationale is that more focus should be put on ensuring there is a coherent peace process, as pushing for women’s engagement in a failing peace process will not ultimately yield positive results. This demonstrates that even though there are clear public commitments by the UK to advancing WPS issues in Libya, there is not enough buy-in even within the British Embassy in Tripoli to pursue these objectives. UK staff reported being unsure of *how* to do this work in Libya, and not fully understanding the positive implications for working on WPS issues in the wider context.

A further complication has been that **the WPS agenda, and women’s rights more broadly, have been weaponized by conservative factions** within the country, and the already small space to work on these issues is shrinking. Because of this, local activists report that there is now **little appetite from the international community to work on WPS issues**, particularly after the fall-out from the Libyan NAP roadmap. The British Embassy in Tripoli noted the noticeable closure of space following the backlash against the Libyan NAP. The British Embassy had planned several events for International Women’s Day, including a focus on WPS, alongside key CSSF-funded programmatic activities. However, in the aftermath of the Libyan NAP backlash, many events and activities were cancelled to avoid causing further harm. The British Embassy now avoids using ‘women, peace and security,’ ‘National Action Plan,’ or other gender-related terms on their public social media pages. Libyan activists have noted that **the international community’s reluctance to work on WPS issues has emboldened conservative and anti-women forces** in the country.

An additional challenge to working on WPS issues in Libya is **the lack of infrastructure for both protection and participation**, including weak governments and a failing peace process, fragmented and ineffective security and justice mechanisms, and no emergency response and prevention plans for SGBV. This, combined with **weak political capacity among women activists** and public-facing representatives, has meant the baseline is very low for working on WPS issues.

## ***5. Lessons Learned and Moving Forward***

Several key lessons can be extrapolated from the WPS activities of both the UK and other international actors over the past several years. The first is around the importance of **engaging a wide and varied group of actors** on WPS issues in Libya, rather than solely engaging those who are seen as immediate ‘allies’ on WPS. **Raising awareness on WPS issues, processes, and frameworks**, including explaining the value of promoting greater women’s participation (among other WPS issues) for the community may help to allay misperceptions and secure greater buy-in. This does not just pertain to Libyan stakeholders, but international actors as well.

Linked to this, **WPS issues should be tailored to the Libyan context**, and this includes approaching and framing WPS issues according to specific Libyan cultural, social, and religious references, which may help diffuse perceptions that the WPS agenda is an attempt to impose foreign values in the country. The British Embassy in Tripoli should capitalise on, and be led by, the detailed Libya Gender Strategy in their work to support policy analysis and development in the country, as well as in their political and programming work.

In a complex context such as Libya, there is value in expanding the data and knowledge base on gender and WPS issues and **ensuring that all programming and policies are rooted in a compelling evidence base**. UK staff noted the importance of the various gender analyses conducted in terms of designing new programmes and strategies. **Engaging a wide and diverse group of local stakeholders** in collecting this evidence will also help build and strengthen local networks and ensure that their views inform WPS policy and programming. This also includes the importance of **ensuring activities are undertaken with a strong conflict sensitivity and political economy lens**, to avoid doing harm and minimising any negative impacts of UK policy and programming.

Finally, a key lesson emerging from WPS programming and policy is the need to **manage expectations on the timeframe of change and what is considered ‘transformative’** in Libya. Given the low baseline and the sensitivities of the context, there is a need to invest in long-term relationship-building that can take years of groundwork before real change is seen. This requires building long-term partnerships in-country, matching ambitions to realities on the ground, and setting realistic and achievable goals in the process. For example, the draft law on violence against women and girls developed by UN Women and civil society poses an opportunity to advance work with other partners and interlocutors, such as in the legal and judiciary fields. Part of this also requires reflecting on what the UK has done over the past several years and conducting an honest **assessment about which activities have had impact and which have not**, along with interrogating the value of activities that are more ‘box-ticking’ than high-impact.

Moving forward, there is consensus that **participation and protection remain priority thematic areas** in which the UK should engage. Yet it is important that this is done in a culturally appropriate way, utilising Islamic and Libyan examples to support protection and participation. In terms of participation, there is a need to invest in women’s leadership around several issues, including economic decision-making, security and justice, crisis management, and climate security and environmental governance. On protection, more extensive understanding, and data on the nature of protection threats facing women is needed, along with a robust and multi-focal strategy for addressing these threats, including creating a strong protective

infrastructure and environment for women. This also includes protecting the wider space for civil society to operate in and working to reverse the trend of restrictions placed on civil society activists.

A further theme that should be explored more fully, and which links both the participation and protection pillars, is **to deepen knowledge around ways to engage women in the peace process**. Staff pointed to the need to learn from other countries around ways in which women can be meaningfully engaged in peace processes. Libya is far from a durable political settlement, and there is consensus around a need for a different and more comprehensive approach going forward. **There is opportunity for the NAP to be clearer about what this kind of participation could look like in practice.**

At the operational level, the UK should work to **link programmatic success at the local level (on peacebuilding, capacity-building, and networking) to national-level policy processes**. Additionally, greater **capacity-building and awareness-raising is needed for UK staff to increase their understanding of the importance of WPS issues for broader peace, stability, and security**, in order to secure greater buy-in among those who are reluctant about the value of working on these issues.



## C. CASE STUDY - UK ENGAGEMENT IN JORDAN

### 1. *Background and Context*

Developed through the collaborative work of UN Women Jordan and the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW), the Jordanian National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (2018-2021) (JONAP I) was launched in March 2018. Its source of support was the pooled funding from several international and national donors. Designed in a participatory manner<sup>29</sup>, JONAP I has four Strategic Goals (SGs) or pillars, focusing on: (1) achieving gender-responsiveness and women's meaningful participation in the security sector and peace operations; (2) achieving women's meaningful participation in preventing radicalization and violent extremism, as well as in regional and national peacebuilding; (3) ensuring the availability of gender-sensitive humanitarian services for Jordanians and refugees, including those most vulnerable to violence; and (4) fostering a community culture that recognises the gender needs, the importance of gender equality and the role of women (including young women) in peace and security.<sup>30</sup>

The United Kingdom (UK) was the largest donor of the JONAP, with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) contributing 50 per cent of the total budget. The UK budget allocation was based on a contribution towards SG 1 and 2, with a 'lighter touch' approach to SGs 3 and 4. The UK also provided diplomatic support via direct engagement with various ministries as well as contacts with CSOs; in addition, the UK played a role as part of the donor coordination efforts facilitated by the UN Women Country Office.

### 2. *Impact and Effectiveness*

#### *a) JONAP's impact on WPS issues in Jordan*

As both the first and largest donor, the UK was instrumental in the realisation of JONAP I, contributing not only financial support, but also strategic guidance and technical advice. In the initial stages, the **UK's support further encouraged and**

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<sup>29</sup> The JONAP I was developed by a National Coalition on UNSCR 1325, which comprised over 60 representatives from government ministries, security sector institutions, CSOs and international partners. According to interviews with UN Women for the Strategic Review, it was this participatory coalition that "created, for the first time, a healthy dialogue between civil society, the security sector, military, and government." (Source: CSSF Jordan Strategic Review Evidence Case Study: An Inclusive Design Process, The building of the JONAP I architecture.)

<sup>30</sup> UN Women, the Jordanian National Commission on Women, and the National Coalition for 1325 (2017). Jordanian National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security 2018 – 2021.

**facilitated buy-in not just from other international donors, but amongst key government agencies as well.** Local partners noted the UK's flexible and context-driven approach that trusted UN Women and JNCW to lead the agenda without imposing many terms and conditions.

The UK's support for the development of the JONAP has been particularly important in terms of the further advancement of the WPS agenda in the country. Interviewees noted that while the WPS agenda provided an impetus for the development of the JONAP, in turn, the **JONAP provided a strategic framework, narrative, and language** for engaging on WPS issues in Jordan. For example, while the **first phase of the JONAP focused less on localisation and prioritised a national outlook**, JONAP I helped provide a framework for UN Women's engagement with CSOs working across the country. This contributed to the development of a network of first responder organisations that are able to mobilise quickly to respond to emergencies in situations involving sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), domestic disputes requiring mediation, and even issues surrounding radicalisation. This form of direct support to CSOs, working in partnership with the Government to implement the NAP, is hailed as an international best practice.<sup>31</sup>

Additionally, according to local CSOs, the **JONAP helped provide a common language to frame 'gender' that focused on broader social norms rather than just women, and that was also inclusive of men and boys.**<sup>32</sup> Though there is still much work to be done on this, in the past, discussions of "gender" were seen as a foreign agenda, and the building blocks that went into developing JONAP helped sensitise some groups and institutions that may have previously been suspicious of the 'gender agenda' as primarily a 'foreign' concept.

#### *b) Gender mainstreaming in the security sector*

The first phase of the JONAP focused primarily on security institutions, namely the Public Security Directorate (PSD) and Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF). This was also where British Embassy Amman (BEA) staff and partners most clearly articulated the UK's contribution. Firstly, the JONAP **provided the foundational strategic framework for the development and delivery of the gender mainstreaming strategies (GMS)** of both institutions. Additionally, both the PSD and JAF developed institutional

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<sup>31</sup> Presented at the NAP Working Group at the Geneva WPS Focal Points Network meeting, 18-19 May 2022.

<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, this perspective—shared by a local CSO—contradicts a finding in the April 2022 Strategic Review of the JONAP I, which found a lack of shared understanding among both projects' stakeholders and beneficiaries around the concept of gender and gender-related terms and strategies.

structures and strategies, as well as **appointed gender ambassadors** and focal points tasked with promoting gender parity and sensitisation in their units.

The UK's contributions included systemic capacity-building undertaken in both institutions, targeting not just officers at operational level, but also senior decision-makers, which contributed to **gender-sensitising the security institutions**. BEA staff and partners noted a change in perceptions of women's participation in security services as a result. A key element of the success of the GMS, according to interviews, was due to **senior leadership support and buy-in** of gender equality and a desire to be seen as a pioneer on WPS issues in the region.

**The UK also provided technical expertise in policing, including conducting several trainings and learning events for Jordanian security institutions on WPS issues that extended beyond the JONAP.** This included Training of Trainers (ToT) workshops, peer-to-peer learning, as well as 'leading by example' through showcasing female officers in the UK. BEA staff noted an increased acceptance for equality, diversity, and inclusion among male Jordanian cadets within PSD, and felt that this is a direct outcome of such UK support.

The UK also offered to provide learning-on-the-job support to the newly formed gender units and explored ways to support the implementation of the JAF and PSD gender mainstreaming strategies, as well as **provide training to female officers** to equip them with necessary skills and tools to acquire more senior positions.

There has been a noticeable **increase in women's participation** in JAF, PSD and in overseas peacebuilding missions in the last 2.5 years. Nevertheless, questions remain about whether this increase is reflected in higher-level decision-making positions. Both socio-cultural and structural barriers persist for women's higher-level participation<sup>33</sup>, and interviewees noted that this is more of a long-term goal.

Two key challenges for the future were highlighted by BEA and partner staff. The first revolves around ensuring that the GMS is **institutionalised** within the various security units, rather than being driven by particular individuals. The second is around ensuring the strategy is **utilised and operationalised**, rather than remaining an ambitious albeit under-utilised strategic document. A remaining challenge, according to some BEA staff, is the **lack of capacity among the security services to develop a concrete roadmap** to translate the high commitments into practical change.

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<sup>33</sup> For example, one reason for the lack of senior-level women in JAF is due to previous policies and regulations, where there was a five-year period where JAF did not take any women, leading to a gap in female enrolment that is reflected in the senior leadership.

*c) The impact of the NAP and WPS agenda on policies and activities with refugees*

The third SG of JONAP I focused on the availability of gender-sensitive humanitarian services for vulnerable populations, such as protection services for refugees and other vulnerable communities, and the provision of legal services and SGBV support, including gender-sensitive services during the COVID-19 response.

CSOs pointed to much work done under this SG, specifically around **GBV and family protection for refugee and host communities**. While the UK did not directly fund these activities, they were part of the pooled funding that included Canada, Norway, Finland, and Spain. UN Women had productive partnerships with several local CSOs, including those specifically working on GBV prevention and protection, **providing services to more than 20,000 vulnerable women across the country**.

However, **there is not enough evidence to attribute the family protection and SGBV-related impacts solely to the JONAP**. As one CSO noted, “We used to do this work before JONAP, so it’s not that JONAP necessarily directed us toward these activities.”

Though the UK adopted only a ‘light touch’ approach to SG 3, interviewees pointed to **knock-on benefits of the UK’s work in the security sector for vulnerable groups including refugees**, pointing to the findings of the Strategic Review of JONAP conducted in April 2022 which found that women’s progression in security services enhanced community engagement. However, this also demonstrates that—both within the JONAP and more broadly—on issues of WPS there appears to have been more engagement with security institutions at the national level than with civil society and community-based organisations, and not much work done on women’s political participation or on civil society monitoring and accountability of security services.

Additionally, the Strategic Review found that **the increase in female officers had a positive impact on reporting cases of domestic violence** by creating safer conditions that encouraged women to report. However, some BEA staff noted that they were not sure enough evidence existed to prove this. What the UK has done, BEA staff noted, was work on GBV with the family protection department, such as providing gender-sensitivity training to judges, including on dealing with GBV cases, though **the positive impacts of such activities are likely to be felt only in the long-term**.

*d) MOD engagement*

Given the role and importance placed on the sphere of defence by the Government of Jordan, the defence attaché is central to facilitating diplomatic relationships between

the UK and Jordan. From a financial perspective, recent UK defence support has been more infrastructure focused. Additionally, the UK also deploys 500 troops annually to enhance Jordanian capability.

The UK has provided bilateral support for the JAF as well, in conjunction with the U.S., Canada and France. A key component of UK support includes **creating and training a women's force commander unit**, a specially trained female platoon combat unit as part of the Quick Reaction Force (QRF), specialised in human intelligence and CIMIC (civil-military interactions) as frontline troops. Formal responsibility for training this platoon was 'handed-over' to Canada soon after the platoon's creation, but the UK continues to provide indirect training and financial support.

Other engagements have been more small-scale (such as investing in female accommodation to ensure more gender-sensitive infrastructure facilities), and primarily strategic rather than financial. The **MOD are also using the GMS developed for the JAF in the design of the next phase of support.**

### **3. Coordination and MEL**

#### *a) Mainstreaming of NAP and WPS within BEA*

One significant finding is that staff across sections did not refer specifically to the UK NAP as the guiding document per se that directed their operational activities in Jordan. Still, BEA staff reported integrating a gender lens in their day-to-day plans, including mainstreaming gender in partners, projects, and procurement. The regional CSSF team has a prerequisite whereby 15 per cent of funding is required to go towards gender projects. For the policing unit within HMG, the gender mainstreaming strategy of the PSD is the main "go-to" document. The Embassy has also developed a gender equality and social inclusion strategy that aims to ensure gender, social inclusion and youth engagement are mainstreamed across all programmes, policies, and engagements. BAE staff also reported high-levels of senior buy-in to the NAP within the Embassy, with both the previous and current ambassadors engaging with JONAP's implementation throughout their various engagements. This high-level political will and support remains crucial to the success of the UK's actions across the missions.

#### *b) Coordination around WPS*

Internally, BEA has a cross-embassy working group that meets quarterly to update all teams on JONAP's progress. As it relates to external coordination, both BEA staff and UK partners expressed positive views around donor coordination, with a technical working group for all JONAP donors functioning well both as an advisory board and in developing advocacy messages. Partners in government and civil society highlighted

the **UK's regular contributions and expertise on WPS issues during quarterly progress meetings held by UN Women** (as the JONAP donor coordination secretariat) on **the implementation of JONAP**. The UK's expertise on WPS issues was also noted as helpful in the development of the second JONAP, including during national consultations that took place in September/October 2021.

BEA staff noted that coordination with the Canadian Government has been fruitful on WPS issues, particularly on policing, given that the Canadian Government has a feminist foreign policy.

**Staff turnover within BEA** has, however, presented a challenge to implementation. Since the beginning of JONAP, five different people have managed the project from the UK Embassy side, and this staff turnover reportedly impacted both institutional memory as well as maintenance and depth of relationships with partners.

Furthermore, the UK supports the implementation of the JONAP through UN Women, and thus does not have direct contact with local CSOs working on the ground. BAE staff expressed that the lack of a **direct relationship with local implementing partners was one of the missed opportunities of the project**. Though regular field visits were planned to ensure UK engagement with local partners, COVID-19 prevented many of these from happening. Additionally, some local CSO partners expressed a desire to have had more of a direct relationship to BEA and felt that more localisation was needed. In some cases, they noted that UN Women could have decentralised some of the decision-making when it came to implementation.

### *c) Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning*

As it relates to the JONAP, BEA staff expressed the view that there were weaknesses in the monitoring and reporting systems in place. The lack of a results framework and the existence of only 3-4 main end line outcomes (which encouraged partners to report annually on activities rather than outcomes) limited the quality of information received. BEA staff highlighted this as a missed opportunity that will be rectified in the next phase of JONAP. The lack of a clear theory of change was also highlighted as a weakness in the wider MEL framework. Generally, there is a need to move towards collecting **better qualitative data rather than relying solely on quantitative data which do not give a full picture of impact and scale of change**.

On the side of policing, there is a move towards looking at 'meaningful change' rather than focusing solely on the numbers and quantitative data. Specifically, questions were raised by some respondents about how to measure 'meaningful participation' of women in the security sector, looking beyond numbers and towards questions of leadership, influence, and the qualitative participation of women within the security sector. Linked to this, some respondents pointed to the need for better evidence that

show the ways in which greater participation of women in the security sector will lead to improvements in service delivery, addressing the “So what?” question of meaningful participation.

#### **4. Enabling Factors and Persistent Challenges**

A key enabling factor for the success of JONAP I was **early, explicit, and visible senior-level buy-in from the Government and security institutions**, including the Minister of Political and Parliamentary Affairs, the Head of the JAF, and even His Majesty King Abdullah. Buy-in from the security-sector—both JAF and PSD—on UNSCR 1325 was key to advancing the WPS agenda in Jordan.<sup>34</sup> Partners and CSOs noted that this **buy-in was earned through years of sensitisation through audio-visual materials, posters and street and social media campaigns** to transmit specific messages around the importance of women’s roles in the security sector for building peace and preventing conflict, and how women are equal partners with men. As a result, resistance to women’s participation in the security sector weakened over time, which created the conditions for JONAP and the GMS in JAF and PSD.

Another **enabling factor to the success of JONAP I was its governance structure**, which included a high-level inter-ministerial decision-making committee (IMC), as well as a more technical advisory high-steering committee led by JNCW and the Deputy Minister, alongside several technical working groups and WPS coalitions that preceded JONAP, which were the drive to facilitate the adoption of 1325.

Nonetheless, **perception barriers to women’s participation remain within more conservative parts of both society and the government**. Social and gender norms, as well as community perceptions and expectations placed on women, continue to limit the roles that women can play in the security sector. Female deployment within PSD is limited by family and tribal background, and thus women cannot be deployed everywhere the same way that men can. Some of the more conservative government sectors, such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, continue to impede progress on some WPS issues, such as child marriage. However, **continued engagement with the more conservative segments of government and society was deemed crucial**, even if this at times delayed progress.

Though there is evidence that **women have begun to integrate into the military, including in ‘frontline activities’ such as border security, humanitarian and intelligence gathering operations, as well as overseas deployments**, including to Afghanistan, the DRC and Central African Republic, **challenges remain to women’s participation and progress to senior ranks**. Part of this relates to socio-cultural

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<sup>34</sup> Crucially, however, JONAP remains dependent on foreign funding, and the government has not budgeted for JONAP II, indicating a clear dependence on foreign donors for continued funding.

expectations of men's and women's roles within the family (including expectations of pregnancy and motherhood), which places restrictions on women's careers and limits their deployment to less risky areas and (primarily) desk jobs. Additionally, the **lack of female infrastructure**<sup>35</sup> dedicated to the needs of female officers prevents the participation of many women in certain fields or deployments. Finally, some respondents raised the concern of whether the timing was right to push for gender equality across all security services—particularly in areas such as active combat and border defence—given the current sociocultural conditions in Jordan. This concern was driven by perceptions that pushing for gender equality may lead to a potential loss of combat effectiveness.

**Localisation remains a key challenge for the JONAP in Jordan.** This takes several forms. The first relates to the advancement that has taken place in developing a national framework and central government buy-in for JONAP and the WPS agenda more broadly, which has not been reflected as well in local level buy-in and participation. **CSOs outside Amman expressed confusion about how JONAP I might translate on the ground** and feel that they could have been more deeply engaged in the process to ensure local buy-in and operationalisation.

Additionally, there are noted challenges around the JONAP SG 3 relating to preventing violent extremism (PVE). Some work has advanced to tackle violence and radicalisation at the grassroots level, acknowledging that **JONAP I provided an entry point for civil society to engage on PVE issues** (which tend to be highly sensitive in Jordan). However, this engagement has often been done under the guise of 'social cohesion' at the grassroots level and **has not progressed in terms of civil society engagement at the policy level, where PVE remains heavily securitised**. CSOs thus remain hesitant to be directly associated with the PVE agenda for fear of security challenges from authorities.

Relatedly, while there has been close work done with security services, there has been truly little engagement on the demand side of security provision, specifically engagement with civilian oversight mechanisms for security services. **BEA staff acknowledged that more can be done on community engagement and civilian oversight and accountability of security services**, including work with gender sensitising traditional mediation councils.

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<sup>35</sup> This includes the need for women's bathrooms, dorms for sleeping, and childcare facilities. However, some interviewees noted that this is slowly improving, as JAF built a women's training centre in Zarqa that contains these facilities, and PSD is building a women's training centre in Amman.



## **5. Lessons Learned and Moving Forward**

Some key lessons identified by BEA staff and partners include:

1. Take the time to raise awareness and clear misconceptions around WPS issues, including advocating for the wider societal value of women's participation, both within government as well as within communities.
2. Approach issues of gender from a context specific and conflict-sensitive perspective, with the understanding that diverse cultures and generations may have different conceptions of terms and ideas, particularly in the MENA region where 'gender' remains a sensitive subject and is often seen as a foreign agenda.
3. Ensure that the NAP has local buy-in and support, is costed, and that dedicated funding is allocated before embarking on ratification.
4. Strategy alone is not sufficient to bring about lasting change; a roadmap and theory of change are required as well.

Moving forward, a common recommendation is that future engagement on WPS issues, and in particular JONAP II, should include **a stronger focus on localisation**, in line with national priorities in Jordan around decentralisation. Additionally, there is a greater need to investigate **the link between gender, climate, and security**, given the water scarcity issues in the country and its impact on women and girls, as well as greater **gender mainstreaming in the justice and diplomatic sectors, including mediation and crisis management**. Finally, there was mention of shifting approaches, particularly moving from looking specifically at women towards **masculinities and familial expectations**, as well as moving away from binary notions of 'refugees' and 'host communities,' and towards a comprehensive idea of 'vulnerability.'

## D. CASE STUDY - UK ENGAGEMENT IN MALI

### 1. *Background and Context*

After months of popular protests, a military coup on 18 August 2020 led to the resignation of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta. A transitional President Col. Assimi Goita established a government to lead the country for 18 months until democratic elections. Despite diplomatic pressure from the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the transitional government refused to respect the agreed-upon timeframe or provide a clear alternative election timeline.<sup>36</sup> Due to continued delays, lack of transparent communication and with no tangible preparation in sight, **Mali has been living under economic embargo from ECOWAS since January 2022.** The embargo came after both the August 2020 and May 2021 coups and the transition government's defiance of international demands that it respects the transition agreement to hold elections on 27 February 2022.<sup>37</sup> Mali's transition government proposed extending the transition period, which officially began in September 2020, by another five years before staging elections. This will make the transition nearly six and a half years, which goes against the Malian Constitution.<sup>38</sup> The embargo has significant implications on socio-political and diplomatic levels. **The legality and legitimacy of the current government is questionable and as such, sustained (direct) diplomatic support from HMG and other development partners is currently precarious.**<sup>39</sup>

Arguably, Mali has not known normalcy for more than a decade. The coup d'état in March 2012, the first since 1991, marred the reputation of the country as a beacon of democracy in the ECOWAS region. The overthrow of Amadou Toumani Traore's Government was part of the aftershocks of the Arab Spring.<sup>40</sup> The coup, equipped by

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<sup>36</sup> France 24, "UN urges Mali's transitional government to present election timetable," 13 January 2022. Available at: <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20220113-un-urges-mali-s-transitional-government-to-present-election-timetable>.

<sup>37</sup> James Tasamba, "Mali's Military Leader Announces 2-year Transition Period Before Polls," *Anadolu Agency*, 7 July 2022. Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/mali-s-military-leader-announces-2-year-transition-period-before-polls/2607305>.

<sup>38</sup> Ornella Moderan, "Mali's transitional government capitalises on festive lull," *Institute for Security Studies*, 6 January 2022. Available at: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/malis-transitional-government-capitalises-on-festive-lull>.

<sup>39</sup> Emily Fornof and Emily Cole, "Five Things to Know About Mali's Coup," *United States Institute of Peace*, 27 August 2020. Available at: <https://www.usip.org/publications/2020/08/five-things-know-about-malis-coup>.

<sup>40</sup> Simeon H. O. Alozieuwa, "The March 22, 2012, Coup in Mali: Lessons and Implications for Democracy in the West Africa Subregion in the Wave of Transnational Terrorism," *Democracy and Security* 9.4 (September-December 2013): 383-397.

an influx of weapons from Libya, was perpetrated by young military officers frustrated at what they believed was the inadequate government response to the Islamic/Tamashek uprising in the north of the country. As a result of the coup, UN's Multidimensional Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) has been active in Mali since 2013.

Mali **ratified without reservation, several international and regional conventions relating to UN Security Council Resolution 1325.**<sup>41</sup> The 1992 Constitution of Mali guarantees equal rights to all citizens regardless of gender, and in 2010, Mali adopted a national gender policy. In 2015, Mali passed **Law 052 which stipulates the promotion of gender equity and equality in all elected public functions** in the Malian territory. It should be noted, however, that Mali does not have any law against gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation (FGM) and femicide.<sup>42</sup>

Mali is currently implementing its third National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. The first NAP was implemented in 2012-2014, and the second was for the period 2015-2017. The first NAP was drafted on the backdrop of over 20 years of unrest, characterised in particular by:

- An **increase in banditry** in urban and peri-urban areas.
- A **rise in organized crime** (drugs, weapons, human trafficking, and smuggling).
- The presence of **terrorist groups** claiming affiliation with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and a theatre of armed conflict unfolding in the three northern regions (Azawad); and
- The proliferation of **inter-community conflicts** spreading throughout the national territory exacerbated by a combination of religious manipulation ethnic/livelihood **tensions stemming from shrinking natural productive resources/effects of climate change.**<sup>43</sup>

The third NAP (2019-2023) builds on the lessons learned from the first two NAPs. The theory of change centres on women's participation in peacebuilding, reconciliation processes and in post-conflict governance, linked with concrete outcomes and

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<sup>41</sup> This includes CEDAW and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

<sup>42</sup> Mali's third National Action Plan on WPS is accessible here:  
<http://1325naps.peacewomen.org/index.php/mali/>

<sup>43</sup> Mali's third National Action Plan on WPS is accessible here:  
<http://1325naps.peacewomen.org/index.php/mali/>

associated actions. **The third NAP also builds on the lessons learned from the Algiers Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation.** In 2015, the Government of Mali, the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) and the pro-unity Platform of Movements (the Platform) met in Algiers to negotiate and sign the Algiers Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (the Algiers Accord). The Algiers Accord provides a framework to secure durable peace and outlines specific measures the parties must take in relation to security, governance, development, justice, and reconciliation.<sup>44</sup> Supporting the implementation of the Accord is the primary strategic objective of MINUSMA and the international community, including the UK.

Aligned with UNSCR 1325, the Algiers Accord includes gender provisions in line with the framework of the four WPS pillars:

- **Participation and representation:** calls for the participation of women at central level in the Agreement Monitoring Committee (*Comité du Suivi d'Accord -CSA*), *Assemblée Nationale*, and *Haut Conseil des Collectivités*, which together comprise the transition government and at the decentralised level in the *Comité Consultatif de Sécurité (CCLS)*.
- **Prevention:** requires that the Government invest in the development of income generating activities, education/skills development, and the provision of basic social services for women, youth, and other vulnerable groups.
- **Protection:** calls for inclusive and substantial representation of all the populations of Mali (including women) within the armed and security forces.
- **Relief and recovery:** calls for the creation of the Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Council (*Commission Vérité, Justice et Réconciliation, CVJR*) and International Committee of Enquiry to investigate and prosecute all war crimes including sexual crimes and other violations of women's human rights. The agreement goes on to emphasise "no amnesty for the authors of war crimes, crimes against humanity and serious violations of human rights, including violence against women, girls and infants, related to the conflict."

## **2. Impact and Effectiveness**

a) *British Embassy Mali support to Government of Mali and CSOs on WPS and gender issues*

**The British Embassy in Mali (BEM) re-opened in 2015** after closing in June 2012 following the coup. The former Ambassador spoke of working tirelessly with a skeleton

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<sup>44</sup> CSIS, "Why Mali Needs a New Peace Deal," 15 April 2020, Available at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/why-mali-needs-new-peace-deal>.

staff of initially two UK nationals and essential Malian national staff to rebuild the Embassy's reputation both amongst the diplomatic core and to regain the trust of the Malian Government. Despite struggling with high UK staff turnover, **BEM has worked diligently since re-opening to rebuild the programme portfolio and to provide tangible support on key social and development issues in the country.** At present, UK support to Mali is divided into two distinct pillars: Defense & Security (under MOD via MINUSMA); and Conflict Stabilisation & Security Fund (under FCDO).

The BEM has also worked on **rebuilding their collaboration with Malian civil society organisations and is making good strides in this regard.** Between 2021 and 2022, after a long tender process, the BEM partnered with two national NGO's, *Femmes et Développement* (FEDE) and Women in Law and Development in Africa - *Femmes Droits et Développement en Afrique* (WILDAF). FEDE was established in 2002 and works on economic, socio-cultural and security crises that impact women and children. WILDAF was established in 1995 and specialises in the advocacy for and protection of women's rights.<sup>45</sup>

The partnership with FEDE is for a project in the Gao region focused on "*strengthening the ability of women and youth leaders to become active participants in community mechanisms for peace and social cohesion through increasing their confidence, capacities and economic autonomy.*"<sup>46</sup> FEDE will implement this project in partnership with GARDL, a local Gao NGO. **The project aims to contribute to the active and equitable participation of women and youth in the stabilisation process in the Gao Region.**

Through the establishment of a coalition of existing women's and youth associations, the identification and capacity-building of women and youth, and the creation of income-generating activities (IGAs), the project will contribute to the implementation of Resolution 1325 and **the UK NAP on WPS by strengthening the strategic positioning of women and young leaders in community mechanisms for peace and social cohesion.**

Previously, the BEM and FEDE collaborated on a project called Women & Climate Change which focused on a campaign 'Zero plastic waste' as part of an urban climate change project. A participant of that project, 15-year-old Malian activist, Djeneba, spoke at the celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in Bamako about environmental civicism as a key to mitigating the negative effects of climate change. In 2021, FEDE

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<sup>45</sup> Megane Ghorbani, "Mali: No Peace Building without Women," AWID, 29 July 2015. Available at: <https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/mali-no-peace-building-without-women>.

<sup>46</sup> FEDE & GARDL: Project to support the strengthening of stability in the Gao region through the promotion of female and youth leadership: "*Projet Algafiat*" (Peace Project). September 2020.

also worked with **the Stabilisation Fund Human Security project which focused on providing defense for women and children's rights at the local level in the aftermath of the Azawad uprising.** This was one of the first funding mechanisms the BEM participated in after its 2015 reopening.

The partnership with WILDAF, also implemented in the Gao Region, is focused on “empowering women through creating GBV peer-support circles.”<sup>47</sup> This project builds on the work started through the BEM-supported **“One Stop Centre,” which provides free medical and psychological care for women and girl survivors of GBV.** The centres also provide temporary accommodation spaces and training workshops in which women can be trained in trades to ultimately ensure their financial independence. The One Stop model was taken outside of Bamako to 12 other sites around Mali. **WILDAF has also added a component to provide IGAs for members of the peer support group who need to improve their social and economic status.** This project will contribute to their resilience and provide them with tangible means to leave their violent partners. The psychosocial support will facilitate the transition from victim to survivor and boost their confidence, self-esteem, and autonomy.

*b) The impact of Mali's NAP on WPS issues in Mali*

In terms of strengths, the **development process** of the second NAP (2015-2017) **was inclusive and had significant contributions from civil society organizations.** The content covered the four pillars of Resolution 1325 and supplemented the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali resulting from the Algiers Process. The third NAP incorporates the idea of gender into legislative, institutional, and structural reforms. **Overall, it aims at "women's participation in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes and in post-conflict governance".**<sup>48</sup>

The following notable progress was made during the implementation of the second NAP (2015-2017) and the current third NAP (2019-2023):

- **Gender was mainstreamed through an implementation mechanism for the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, particularly through the Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC),** which made it possible to obtain the majority of the evidence gathered from women.
- Since passing Law 052 in 2015, the **representation of women in local elections, in Government and in the Conference of National Understanding (2017) has clearly improved.** Yet their presence in the bodies responsible for the

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<sup>47</sup> WILDAF, “The Peacemakers: No to GBV: Empowering women through creating GBV peer-support circles within WILDAF watch committees,” September 2020.

<sup>48</sup> Mali third National Action Plan on WPS is accessible here: <http://1325naps.peacewomen.org/index.php/mali/>.

implementation of the Algiers Accord Process and within the transition government **remains limited. For example, in 2018 there was only one woman on the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (CNDDR).** As of June 2022, there are nine women represented in the CSA for monitoring the Algiers Accord who are representative of all the regions of Mali, the CMA, and the Platform.

- The representation of women increased **by 9 per cent in the 2016 municipal elections** and women now hold some 26 per cent of the decision-making positions at local level.
- In 2018 **a draft bill against gender-based violence** and a national strategy to end gender-based violence were developed.
- The National Police Force also drew up its own three-year National Action Plan (2018-2020) to combat gender-based violence. Wholistic treatment centres for GBV survivors were built and equipped. One example of this **is "DJIGUIYA", a one-stop shop within the Bamako National Police Force.**<sup>49</sup>
- Programmes have been implemented that are aimed at strengthening the economic resilience of women affected by the conflict. For example, **20,490 women were able to develop income-generating activities as part of a project supported by the UNDP.**
- Women's initiatives have been launched for peace and reconciliation at community level **(peace huts, community, and inter-community dialogue, etc.).**

*c) MOD engagement*

Despite multiple attempts, MOD representatives in Mali were not available for interview for this evaluation. However, according to the FCDO 2022 annual report to Parliament, one of their main initiatives for implementing WPS includes Operation NEWCOMBE, which includes:

*Delivery of WPS and wider Human Security training to deploying UK personnel on the UN mission in Mali (MINUSMA) – Awareness raising, instruction of mandated UN pre-deployment training and practical rehearsals in a real-life environment of WPS and Human Security scenarios. Ensuring military*

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<sup>49</sup> UN Women, "Mali says STOP to gender-based violence (GBV): the new One Stop Center in Bamako, a link between justice and Malian women survivors of GBV," 30 April 2018. Available at: <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2018/04/le-mali-dit-stop-aux-violence-basees-sur-le-genre-vbg>.

*planners include Human Security considerations at all levels and the tactical elements understand how to recognise, respond, report, and refer necessary WPS and Human Security infringements and abuses. (Pillars 1-4, Strategic Objectives 1-7).*<sup>50</sup>

While both the women of the CSA and CSO representatives **expressed appreciation for the women soldiers in the MOD contingent, there are limits**. They commended the roles of women soldiers in facilitating logistics and operations with the local authorities and valued the participation of the women soldiers in the IGAs organised around the Gao base for the women of the region. The CSOs shared that women soldiers from the MOD contingent visited their HQs in Bamako to advise them on questions of access and safety of passage for their activities in the Gao Region.

However, when faced with the question of UK or other soldiers accompanying the Malian Armed Forces (FAMa) or the Gendarmerie Provost on escort, or even accompanying **the women of the CSA or the NGOs for their activities beyond the base surroundings, they were very adamant that such presence not only makes their journey less secure, but it also raises unnecessary suspicion and distrust of them and their activities**. The women of the CSA were very clear that they prefer the escort of their own men.

In terms of gender-sensitive trainings, **the training for soldiers on communicating with survivors and communities around sensitive issues**, including protection, medical and psychosocial protocols following rape and sexual assault was valued.

### **3. Coordination and collaboration**

#### *a) Mainstreaming of the NAP and WPS within British Embassy Mali Programmes*

The BEM staff stated that while they are unfamiliar with the UK and Malian NAPs, they have a general understanding of UNSCR 1325, and an internal BEM gender approach loosely aligned with it. This approach is built around the three E's of **ending** violence against women, girls' **education**, and women's **empowerment**.

In addition to the previously detailed partnerships with FEDE and WILDAF, **the BEM also meets regularly with a consortium of CSOs working at the intersection of women's and girls' rights and education, GBV (including FGM), and issues of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC)**. Through this multi-disciplinary group of actors and activists, the BEM staff are supporting women's CSOs to identify male champions and allies across sectors. An

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<sup>50</sup> FCDO, 2022 WPS Annual Report to Parliament - MOD Evidence.



interesting example of WPS work was a visit to Mali by Rita French, Britain's Ambassador for Human Rights, and the MOD's Islamic Advisor Imam Asim Hafiz **to discuss interpretations of the Quran that allow more space for improved respect of human rights, inclusion, diversity, peace, and civil liberties for affected populations.** The Director of FEDE remarked that the exchange with the Islamic Advisor was **extremely useful and provided the participants of the session with additional arsenal for their respective battles with Malian leaders across all spheres.** Despite claiming to be a secular state, the Malian authorities rely heavily on the influence of the renowned Imams, Marabouts and local scholars who favour more repressive interpretations of Islamic law.

The organization Independent Diplomat (ID) started advising the CMA on the implementation of the Algiers Accord in 2018 focusing first on their diplomatic engagement with the UN. Since 2021, **the BEM has collaborated with ID to provide support and training to the women of the CSA and armed forces.**<sup>51</sup> The women of the CSA have been trained in international mediation and networking, negotiation, and persuasive public speaking, as by their own admission it is **difficult to garner the support of male CSA members beyond purely security issues.**

ID reports that the efforts of this project in Mali now include the promotion of political and institutional reform, **to recruit, nominate and elect women to decision-making positions and then to involve them productively in processes.** These reforms are particularly important given the low implementation of Law 52 which calls for at least 30 per cent of women in all national institutions. **Even in cases where women are installed in positions of authority, they are often ill-prepared and/or isolated so they are not particularly effective** in such positions, therefore the ID accompaniment of the women of the CSA is crucial. This approach is bearing fruit, as the active participation of women in the CSA has expanded the government dialogue to include discussions on development, including better access to basic social services and increased economic access for women, which have been neglected in comparison to the security pillar and are critical to tackling the root causes or drivers of conflict in Mali.

#### **4. Enabling Factors and Persistent Challenges**

##### *a. UK troops and MINUSMA*

Under Operation NEWCOMBE, HMG deployed UK trainers and international law experts to support the MINUSMA based EU training mission for the Malian Gendarme and FAMa officers. The MOD sent 10-15 per cent women peacekeepers as part of the NEWCOMBE deployment. The CSOs report that the women officers at the Gao base

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<sup>51</sup> <https://independentdiplomat.org/project/inclusive-peace-in-mali/>

work with women's commercial gardening groups to promote IGAs for the local women. However, **women officers are only sent on the long-range reconnaissance missions if they have a specific role in the recon team**, otherwise the bulk of the UK women troops remain on the Gao base for coordination operations, logistics and liaising with the government officials.

#### *b. Gao Stabilisation Fund*

The Gao Stabilisation Fund (GSF) falls under the BEM CSSF portfolio and is implemented by Adam Smith International on behalf of HMG in four project areas<sup>52</sup>:

- **Strategic dialogue** to combat disinformation and radicalisation
- **Youth employment** to reduce susceptibility to join vigilante/armed groups and to combat clandestine immigration
- **Community resilience** focused mostly on creating income-generating activities for women that are not dependent of the base as a primary market
- **WPS** which is transversal throughout all the other projects, and as a standalone initiative supports commercial gardening groups for women, which also double as discussion groups that offer psychosocial support to survivors of the conflict, counter dis- and misinformation and advocate for peace and reconciliation.

#### *c. BEM Human Resources*

**High staff turnover within BEM** has presented a challenge to implementation and monitoring. In the last year alone, all key UK National programme positions have either served half of their terms in Bamako and half in London, or the positions have been vacant for almost a full fiscal year. One of the strongest features of the BEM team is the **extremely competent Malian national staff who serve as the institutional memory for BEM**. They work diligently to translate the socio-cultural context and maintain productive relationships with the government even in the current precarious legal and diplomatic context.

### **5. Lessons Learned and Moving Forward**

Women of the CSA and CSO members **emphasised the need for feedback and follow up after UK supported missions to Mali**. For example, while they found the visit of the MOD's Islamic Advisor extremely useful, there was no follow up after the visit and no means to continue the interaction. The CSOs are very keen to have the

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<sup>52</sup> <https://bidstats.uk/tenders/2021/W41/760676766>

Imam connect them to other countries he has advised who have implemented some of the learnings he shared.

Some key recommendations on the NAP identified by the Mali Government and CSOs include:

- Put in place an **M&E structure for process monitoring**
- Identify the challenges and gaps and corrective measures to **ensure that the needs of women and girls are integrated in national policies** before adoption
- **Disseminate all material relative to UNSCR 1325, the NAP and the WPS agenda** at decentralised level via all forms of national and community-based media
- **Educate women about their rights** and the responsibilities of the government to uphold them
- **Strengthen the collaboration between all arms of government** who work on WPS issues and **encourage national dialogue about UNSCR 1325 and the NAP** beyond questions of security
- **Collaborate with religious leaders** to combat dis- and misinformation about gender equity, equality, the status and rights of women and girls, human rights, and other forms of diversity
- Continue to advocate for and facilitate the **election, nomination, recruitment, retention and education and proper training of women**
- For the sustainability of all WPS and NAP interventions, **invest more deliberately in competent and qualified Malian CSOs**

Some key lessons and recommendations identified by BEM staff regarding the CSSF Stabilisation Fund, and the NAP include:

- 1) **Revise the Results Framework:** simplify the NAP reporting system and train and support BEM staff on its use
- 2) Based on discussions with CSA women, CSOs and the GSF team, **more effort should be placed on capturing lessons learned** within the Malian context and the region and adapting projects as required. There are also looming questions around the sustainability of maladapted interventions.
- 3) **Greater coordination is still required within the international community** given its multitude of actors and resulting risks for duplications or gaps in

programming. The UK can play a key role, as it is seen as a collaborative, but more neutral player than others.

- 4) **Resources:** High staff turnover amongst the UK National programme team can be mitigated by **partnering more with national CSOs and investing in building their capacity**. Investing in national CSOs is also more cost efficient than constantly relying on short term high-cost international staff. Additionally, given the perceived neutrality of the UK presence in Mali, BEM can really leverage its role to **catalyse other international partners to be more transparent on the types of support available to CSOs** and how it can be accessed.
- 5) **Funding arrangements:** multi-year funding arrangements should be considered for development projects in Mali; nothing shorter than five years.

## V. KEY FINDINGS

### A. IMPACT OF THE NAP

Overall, **the impact of the NAP itself was extremely difficult to evaluate** because of the lack of data and mechanisms to monitor the plan. The need for an operational logical framework and a more effective evidence base to inform and guide the implementation of the NAP was raised across departments, missions and by civil society.

Even when it appears that operational links can be made to point to specific changes, **the lack of a monitoring framework makes it impossible to assess exact attribution and contribution to such changes at various levels**, and to what degree those changes are related to the NAP itself or might have happened for a range of other factors, sometimes completely unrelated.

*“It is clear that the results are there, the impact is being made – read-outs of various meetings where we see some progress- but there is no follow-up and no deeper understanding of the specific outcomes.”*

**Interview with HMG Staff**

#### **UK ADDED VALUE AS A LEADER ON WPS:**

##### **SUPPORT TO NAP DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES IN PARTNER COUNTRIES**

The evaluation found that one of the most prominent areas where the impact of the NAP was the most visible was the **support to NAP development in select countries**. The best examples of sustainable and effective support provided to partner countries to develop their NAPs was found in Uruguay and Jordan. In addition to its financial support, the UK **led international support for the development of the NAPs in Uruguay and Jordan via diplomatic and advocacy work, which included partnerships and support to national civil society and partner governments**.

**From 2019 to 2021, in Uruguay**, with the support of the FCDO Gender and Children in Conflict Team, the Embassy partnered with international experts and – for a very small budget of about £10,000 – organized a series

of workshops to introduce international NAP experiences and explore ways in which the Uruguay Ministry of Foreign Affairs could start the process. Across various MDAs, including the Uruguay Ministry of Defence, **the UK support was described as critical for moving the NAP process and strengthening the capacity of implementing actors.** The UK mission had identified the opportunity to support the NAP process and was a **driving force in coordinating efforts** from the government, civil society, and the international community.

The Embassy continued to provide technical assistance to the Government of Uruguay and substantive inputs to the NAP development process. It was instrumental in **integrating the inclusion of civil society and expanding the priorities of the NAP beyond the peacekeeping lens.** The NAP was finalized mid-June 2022, and the Mission is working in partnership with the Government to support its funding.

A member of the Gender Associations evaluation team has participated firsthand in similar UK Mission support initiatives around the world, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Jordan, Sudan, and Viet Nam, to name a few. Overall, this model of holistic support includes not just the critical funding support, but equally (and occasionally more) important **diplomatic work with the host government, engagement with the local civil society** (including grassroots organizations), **advocacy and coordination with other donor countries, public relations and events that support the NAP, technical support** to share experiences and increase knowledge, connections to multilateral organizations and deep engagement in the implementation phase.

This support to the NAP processes of partner countries is an excellent example of **positive bilateral engagement and UK strategic assistance.** It has the potential to deliver an immense return on investment and lead to concrete and sustainable change in partner countries. Since the start of the current NAP in 2018, the UK has supported a number of countries to develop and implement their own NAPs, including Afghanistan, Argentina, Azerbaijan, DRC, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lithuania, Northern Macedonia, South Africa, Uruguay, Vietnam, and Yemen. Form 2016/2017, it also provided funding and technical support to help Nigeria develop its second NAP (2017-2020).

## 1. **Impact on the Lives of Women and Girls in Conflict-Affected Contexts**

There is no assessment or empirical evidence of the impact of the NAP activities on the situation of women and girls in conflict-affected countries beyond the outputs of various activities - while important, such outputs are not possible to aggregate in a way that can attest to meaningful change in the lives of women and girls. **It is thus difficult for actors to attribute any kind of progress most directly to the NAP itself.** The evaluation found **some cases of impact at the individual level**, but interviews suggested that the real issue is around the lack of strategic reflection on how missions' activities can contribute to achieving the intended impact.

In the face of the absence of clear operational guidance and theory of change, the main driver for WPS efforts was the personal commitments and expertise of senior leadership at posts, rather than a more thoughtful and deliberate approach to answer **'so what'** questions of intended activities.

*"In and across countries, **the impact has been extremely varied.** The main driver is, apart from funding, personalities who lead (or not) at posts."*

**Interview with HMG Staff**

### **UK ADDED VALUE AS A LEADER ON WPS:**

#### **ENSURING THE PROTECTION OF VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

The evaluation found that one of the most effective engagements is those targeting the **protection of women in conflict and humanitarian emergencies, particularly from sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)**, both through multilateral spaces and in focus countries.

Examples include:

##### **Multilateral engagement**

- In August 2018, after some briefers had faced threats after participating in Council sessions, the UK launched an initiative with the UN's Department of Political Affairs, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and the NGO Working Group on WPS

to address **the risk of reprisals against women civil society speakers who come to brief the Council.**<sup>53</sup>

#### **In focus countries**

- In the DRC, the UK provided free legal advice, mobile courts, and support to the UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) investigations, for the victims of human rights violations and sexual violence. With UK support, effective protection measures were established and over 300 victims were able to participate safely in the investigation and in the trials.<sup>54</sup>
- In Myanmar, the UK funded the Livelihoods and Food Security Fund (LIFT), which reduces the risk of trafficking survivors being re-trafficked in Yangon, Tachileik and Lashio and equips them with assistance and livelihood opportunities for more stable futures. Under the programme in 2021, LIFT'S partner provided more than 266 survivors (95 per cent women) with training, counselling, shelter, and referral services.

## **2. Impact on the Domestic Agenda, Particularly on Women's Representation in the Armed Forces and Peacekeeping Operations**

### *a) Women's representation in the armed forces and peacekeeping operations*

The Human Security policy guidance articulates the MOD's overall priorities for WPS and provides guiding principles for action. The policy was influenced by the NAP and is part of the MOD's strategic operating procedures.

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<sup>53</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022: Annual Report to Parliament 2018.

<sup>54</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022: Annual Report to Parliament 2020.



## **UK ADDED VALUE AS A LEADER ON WPS:**

### **GENDER-RESPONSIVE PEACEKEEPING**

Peacekeeping remains a priority space for UK engagement on WPS. Many examples were found of the UK successfully **championing the inclusion of WPS in peacekeeping operations both at the UN level and through its support to partner countries.**

Notable examples include:

- **At the UN level**, the UK, as a Permanent Member of the UNSC, played a crucial role in strengthening and **pushing for the inclusion of WPS language in peacekeeping mandates in the UNSC**, including:
  - the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)
  - the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus (UNFICYP)
  - the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).<sup>55</sup>
- **At the country level**, the Gender and Children in Conflict Team and the Human Security team regularly support the training of partner country security forces.
  - In November 2018, the MOD ran the first **UK Military Gender and Protection Advisor Course**. The FCO funded the participation of officers from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Somalia. They received in-depth training from HMG experts and civil society and learned to conduct gender analysis and build a gender perspective into military planning.<sup>56</sup>
  - In 2020, **MOD and FCDO worked with the UN and the British Peace Support Team Africa** to conduct trainings with both military and the police. They also developed a gender policy to integrate WPS training across the board. This resulted in impact

<sup>55</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022: Annual Report to Parliament 2020.

<sup>56</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022: Annual Report to Parliament 2018.

on the ground. Recently, Zambia hosted a WPS training and exceeded the gender targets.

The NAP has allowed staff to push internally for the strengthening of MOD policy on sexual violence and harassment. The 2021-Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey revealed that 11 per cent of women had been subjected to sexual harassment in a Service environment in the previous 12 months.

**The MOD has also focused on improving the training and recruitment of women;** however, they continue to struggle to retain female recruits.

*“The MOD and single Services have already taken some welcome steps, including on training. While we accept change takes time, it worries us that the female intake target of 15 per cent was missed in 2020 and the share of women among recruits has reduced in the year since then.”*

#### **Protecting those who protect us: Women in the Armed Forces from Recruitment to Civilian Life: Government Response to the Committee’s Second Report**

Internally, while buy-in and capacity have improved in this area and initiatives have been taken by leadership to address these challenges, such as the commission of the annual Sexual Harassment Surveys starting in 2022, **the absence of mechanisms to measure progress or assess the impact on the ground has contributed to morale problems amongst staff.**

#### *b) Domestication of the WPS Agenda*

Despite a strong push from civil society, the NAP is outward-looking. **The domestication of the WPS agenda is largely absent, beyond the intention to increase the UK's contribution to peacekeeping by increasing the presence of its own women in various missions.** As a result, there is little evidence of the impact of the NAP on domestic policy beyond the recruitment of female officers in the MOD.

The past years marked by COVID-19 and more recently the conflict in Ukraine have highlighted many of the UK's domestic security vulnerabilities. In addition, the reality of complexities in Northern Ireland have emphasized the importance of the Good Friday Agreement to safeguard both the peace process and women's and girls' rights.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> GAPs, “Assessing UK Government Action on Women, Peace, and Security in 2019”, 2020.

Some interviewees felt that **the UK should lead by example and bring coherency between what it advocates for internationally and the social, political, and economic position of women and girls in the UK.** Interviewees cited the lack of support services for migrant women and asylum seekers living in the UK who have escaped physical and sexual abuse in conflict-affected areas and fragile states, the prevalence of sexual violence in detention centers, the prevalence of misogynist views in the police and the army and the use of strip search by the police as possible focus areas for the domestication of the WPS agenda in the next NAP.

**Figure 10 - Extract from GAPs recommendations** <sup>58</sup>

**Recommendations**

The UK Government should:

- Undertake a comprehensive analysis of the impact of COVID-19 and the new post-Brexit-relationship with the EU on the domestic context for WPS and set out a clear response as a matter of urgency; this includes application of the NAP to Northern Ireland and for refugees and asylum-seeking, migrant and trafficked women and girls in the UK.
- In the recovery from COVID-19, address the lack of uniform protection and support for women and girls who are asylum-seekers, refugees and with insecure immigration status. This includes amending the Domestic Abuse Bill to establish a firewall between reporting, public services and immigration enforcement,<sup>20</sup> and ensuring all women, including those with no 'Recourse to Public Fund' status can access lifesaving refuges.
- In preparation for the next UK NAP, begin working with domestic UK departments who have an important role in the WPS agenda. This is to ensure that the UK is fully implementing its commitments and is line with other donor country NAPs who have a domestic focus (including Ireland, the Netherlands, Canada, Norway, Sweden and Germany).

## **B. SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED**

### **1. Successes and UK Value-Add Areas**

The UK has a strong global presence through its diplomatic, development and military relationships with countries across the globe. In terms of strategic expertise, **the UK is a respected actor, and its leadership is valued beyond financial contributions.** Despite the difficulties to assess impact, several themes stood out as particular UK 'value-add' areas. These could be mobilized by the Gender and Children in Conflict Team (FCDO) to carve a deeper niche for the UK and to achieve greater impact from the next NAP.

<sup>58</sup> GAPs, "Assessing UK Government Action on Women, Peace, and Security in 2020", 2021.

These include:

*a) Advancing the WPS agenda in multilateral forums*

From policy to programming and diplomacy, it is noteworthy that the UK has continued to play a leadership role in advancing the WPS agenda as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council along with its role in NATO, the OSCE and the AU. **No other country has done as much to protect WPS language and ensure that WPS remains a priority in the multilateral space.** Specifically, civil society actors from around the world recognize that, unlike some of the other donor nations whose WPS commitments vary significantly as the domestic political contexts change, **the UK has remained a steady leading voice to elevate WPS priorities over the decades.**

Examples of successful initiatives include:

- At the UN level: Through its NAP, the UK is leading the way in promoting and protecting the existing WPS normative framework.
  - In 2019, the UK set up a protection framework with ICAN to recognize reprisals and threats against civil society and women briefers, and since then they have worked with OHCHR to develop guidelines and support for CSOs engaging with the UNSC.
  - The UK was able to bring likeminded Member States together to ensure that language that would undermine the WPS agenda was not included in mission or peacekeeping mandates or UN Security Council Resolutions.
- At the level of G7: the UK commonly uses the NAP to influence discussions and indirectly advocate other countries to take onboard suggestions or outcomes relevant to the WPS agenda.
  - In 2021, the UK used its Presidency of the G7 to galvanise international action through the G7's first ever G7 famine prevention and humanitarian crises compact. In addition to mobilising urgent funding for humanitarian assistance in the countries at greatest risk, the Compact commits G7 nations to support action to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, as well as the economic harm and the health impacts experienced by women and girls in conflict and crises.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> FCDO, "Policy paper: G7 famine prevention and humanitarian crises compact," 5 May 2021. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/g7-foreign-and-development-ministers-meeting-may-2021-communiqué/g7-famine-prevention-and-humanitarian-crises-compact>.

- At the EU level: the UK worked closely with EU Member States to ensure that WPS was an integral part of the EU's approach to the broader multilateral agenda.
  - In collaboration with Sweden, the UK supported the EU's inclusion of a gender adviser in all Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) posts and operations.<sup>60</sup>
- At the NATO level, the UK was a leading voice in pushing for an ambitious WPS action plan for 2018-2020 and establishing a methodology for gender analysis in NATO HQ.
  - The UK is also in the leading group of Allies pushing for change and funding the development of a policy on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and a policy on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence. The UK has actively promoted the WPS agenda, ensuring that gender is referenced in all committees.<sup>61</sup>

*b) Engaging in policy dialogue on WPS with partnered countries*

*"Bilaterally, the UK will work with host governments and other donor governments to deliver on WPS objectives in country, seeking to deliver joint programming with other donors in countries such as Iraq and Syria."*

## UK NAP 2018-2022

There are many examples of the NAP being a useful framework to lead efforts with international actors to support other countries to develop and implement their own WPS commitments. **The UK has played a leading role in donor coordination and has been active in using the NAP to engage in policy dialogue with partnered countries active on WPS**, especially Canada, Norway, and Germany.

- In Egypt, through CSSF funding, the UK supported Egypt's ongoing work in 2019 to draft its first NAP on WPS, in support of Egypt's wider aspirations on gender equality.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022: Annual Report to Parliament 2018.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022: Annual Report to Parliament 2019.

- In the DRC, the UK successfully helped broaden the focus from gender-based violence (GBV) to WPS in the context of the revision of the International Security and Stabilisation Support Strategy (I4S).<sup>63</sup>
  - In Nigeria, the UK supported WPS consultation meetings in all five federal member state capitals bringing together 360 women leaders to determine new options to enhance women's voices in peace and political processes.<sup>64</sup>
- c) *Potential as a bridge-builder between peacebuilding processes and WPS in conflict-affected contexts*

The UK has the **potential to play a key role as a bridge between peace process** issues and WPS because they are one of the few actors to be involved in the peace processes and have WPS expertise.

In conflict-affected countries, the UK is respected by partners for their **ability to operate in a conflict-sensitive and risk-averse way**. Multiple examples were reported in the case studies of how the UK is trusted by women activists and LGBTIQ activists on the ground.

## **2. Challenges and Lessons Learned**

### *a) Relevance of the NAP*

Although the document review and case studies revealed a wide coverage of UK engagements on WPS, most of the programmes were either designed before the start of the fourth NAP or were **influenced by other context-specific factors rather than guided directly by the NAP**.

The evaluation revealed important **limitations stemming from the design of the NAP and hindering its ability to be an effective vehicle for advancing the UK's work on WPS**, especially at the operational and tactical levels.

#### i. Lack of strategic vision

The NAP was not developed with the concrete impact results in mind and lacks a logical structure linking impact with outcomes, outcomes with outputs, and outputs with activities. Without this framework, and in the absence of an effective theory of change, it was **difficult to promote a common vision across actors and foster ownership from the departments**. This led to a lack of understanding of the agenda

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<sup>63</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022: Annual Report to Parliament 2018.

<sup>64</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022: Annual Report to Parliament 2018.

on a strategic level, both from managers and technical staff. On the one hand, the ongoing political commitments have ensured that the UK continues to promote the WPS agenda but in a mostly ad-hoc way, mostly due to individual staff, and over the decades it has become **'how we do business.'** However, the NAP itself was not seen as a direct, practical tool that would offer concrete guidance and utility in shaping the Missions' own WPS programmes and interventions.

On the other hand, a portion of interviewees talked more positively about the NAP at this strategic level **as a useful tool for staff in legitimizing attention to WPS and maintaining traction on WPS priorities in their departments.** There was a sense that the NAP helped to give more coherence to work on WPS and provided a tool to put political pressure on the ministers and the senior leadership to engage more on WPS.

ii. Unclear roles and responsibilities

From its conception, the NAP was conceived as a **high-level guidance document.** The NAP did not have clear deliverables or a standardized M&E system. There are no internal documents that outline the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders and units involved in the implementation of the NAP.

As a result, **the actors involved in the NAP implementation lacked clarity on which NAP activities were within the responsibility of their division** and how they could deliver added value to the NAP implementation, whether at the department, division, or unit level. Achievements on WPS have been more widely driven by individual and cultural factors rather than institutional or strategic factors.

iii. Difficulties to operationalize the NAP at both missions and HQ level

The UK NAP is not action-focused and does not set out which activities or actions should be undertaken to achieve the strategic outcomes. **There is no theory of change or guidance on how to translate and operationalize the NAP objectives at the various levels.**

Consequently, almost all stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation, both HQ and missions, suggested that **the NAP was not a document they referred to or used in their daily work,** and some staff had not even heard of it or read it until being asked to take part in the evaluation. While some stakeholders suggested that the NAP was useful as a way to gather different activities in one place; many viewed the NAP as a high-level document with limited utility in their day-to-day work.

iv. Lack of policy coherence

Gender equality in general and WPS in particular are key features of, and priorities within, UK development cooperation, humanitarian assistance and military and

peacekeeping engagements, as confirmed via stakeholder interviews and strongly reflected in the document review, where these cross-cutting themes occur often across polices, strategies, and reports. However, **the NAP does not articulate how it aligns with the other foreign policy strategies** or how it connects to the broader priorities of HMG on peace and security. **This leads to duplication** between the NAP and other foreign policy strategies related to various forms to promote gender equality.

*“Output 3.3 of the NAP, which states that “the UK will protect the rights of women and girls and will empower them by increasing the employment, health, education, and training services available to girls,” is drawn almost entirely from DFID’s Strategic Vision for Women and Girls, creating a necessity for double reporting.”*

#### Interview with HMG Staff

- v. Relevance of the focus country model and the strategic outcomes

**The focus country model** is useful for several reasons:

- **Resources:** it allows for generating specific funds for specific countries
- **M&E focus:** it allows for the capture of clearer changes of impact
- **Political:** it generates more focus and commitments from ministers.

However, there is concern that WPS efforts are not equally addressed and applied outside of the NAP’s priority countries. In the face of the recent conflict in Ukraine, **the inflexibility of the focus countries represents a challenge**. Furthermore, the common theme expressed by the **missions of the focus countries was the sense of ‘all pain and no glory.’** Typically focus country missions would not receive additional funding or other forms of increased resources, yet still be required to do more work and also spend considerable time reporting.

They also noted the lack of a ‘feedback loop’ in reporting, as they would provide inputs for reports, but not necessarily benefit from more in-depth analysis and suggestions for improvements. On the other hand, it appears that even with significant limitations, the Gender and Children in Conflict Team has increased its availability and commitment to assist missions with implementation. Although staff changes and the COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact in curtailing more in-depth cooperation. **This is definitely recognized as a chief area of attention for the next NAP.**



Furthermore, focus countries, like Myanmar or South Sudan, **remain the most difficult contexts in which to run WPS programming and to have an impact generally**. Many noted the difficult reality that despite significant investments in Afghan women over the last 21 years, the fall of Kabul caused a serious crisis of faith and commitment in WPS circles writ large, and of course in donor countries, including the UK. It is important to note that the lead author of this report participated in the August evacuations and witnessed how many Afghan women leaders were supported by the UK Embassy, recognizing however the ultimate reality of the overall sense of a failure in Afghanistan. For the MOD, adding to the difficulty is the very choice and application of the focus countries model seems to be almost entirely driven by FCDO.

The **NAP focus country model was described as mostly unhelpful by respondents for the UN case study**. For the JPKU, this model does not apply to how they operate, and deployment is not driven much by the NAP. Peacekeeping missions do not change as often, and it is only in the DRC where there is potential overlap. In terms of work at the Security Council, there is a Council agenda that addresses the most active crises and pressing security issues. The UKMIS is expected to respond to whatever is raised in the Council, but their work is hindered when the capacity and understanding in Capital is limited due to a lack of focus and expertise beyond the focus countries. The focus country model does not inform the path forward on WPS at the UN or where the UK should engage in New York and Geneva. Furthermore, some countries may not be a priority for the UK, but they may be priorities for their allies; for example, the situation in Haiti is of high risk and fragile, particularly for women, but this does not align with the UK NAP.

vi. The choice of the strategic outcomes

**The intention behind the choice of the strategic outcomes was to give sufficient flexibility to country posts** to guide their country plans around the seven outcomes rather than imposing fixed country plans for five years. It was a consensus among interviewees that in that sense, this approach has been useful. However, the narrow nature of the strategic outcomes coupled with the lack of operational guidance means that **missions lack a clear sense of what value add they can deliver to the NAP implementation**.

*b) Coordination*

i. Siloed approach

The challenge in achieving a coordinated, whole of government approach is partly due to uneven institutionalization and a lack of awareness of the NAP within government. The stakeholder interviews and the document review **did highlight some anecdotal examples of strategic coordination**. For example, in 2018, to mark the 100th anniversary of women in the UK winning the right to stand for election to Parliament,

the Government and Parliament hosted the Women MPs of the World Conference to discuss how to strengthen visibility and further empower women parliamentarians to continue to drive change nationally and internationally.

However, the evaluation reveals that **the NAP has not been an effective framework for stakeholder collaboration**. A stakeholder noted that much of the work is being driven by junior grades and Ministerial leadership has been lacking.

In addition, from its development, **some important institutions such as the Home Office were not included in the NAP**. As a result, work on WPS is often done in isolation.

ii. Coordination between MOD and FCDO

The evaluation highlighted **coordination gaps at the operational and tactical levels between MOD and FCDO**. Stakeholder noted that coordination between the two has improved in the past year with the instauration of more regular meetings. However, interviews also revealed a need to better explore linkages between the day-to-day work of the MOD and FCDO beyond the policy level. While there have been examples of joining efforts at posts in some locations, the lack of a common approach between MOD and FCDO coupled with the lack of formal coordination structure result a gap at the higher level in terms of strategic reflection around joint implementation. Recognizing these are different departments, having the same missions and mandates would be a duplication of efforts. Still, while two ministerial departments naturally have their own missions and mandates, there is a lot of space to find coherence and find ways to cooperate and be mutually supportive in the areas in which there is cross-over.

iii. Coordination between HQ and missions

**There was a consensus among interviewees that the Gender and Children in Conflict Team is leading the development and review of NAP activities and the mainstreaming of WPS priorities across departments**. The Gender and Children in Conflict Team's support to the Women Mediators Across the Commonwealth network was hailed as an example of best practice of coordination between HQ and mission for its efforts to ensure that posts build relationships with the women of the network. Since 2018, the UK has provided £2m to support the Women Mediators Across the Commonwealth network.

While there was **increased recognition and appreciation for the Team's work overall as it relates to the NAP, interviewees pointed to the need for increased resources** (human, technical and financial) to support NAP development, implementation, coordination, and monitoring across the range of countries and actors.

The evaluation revealed that some of **the main limitations for effective implementation stemmed from weaknesses related to coordination mechanisms**, including insufficiently institutionalized procedures of coordination and reporting both horizontally and vertically.

Furthermore, the **COVID-19** pandemic and resulting cancellation of country visits, conferences, and trainings, coupled with the DFID and FCO merger have **aggravated the disconnect between HQ and missions**. Even though there is a strong commitment on behalf of the WPS team at HQ and mission level, **the staff is stretched across multiple and competing priorities** and there is little time for strategic feedback. For the posts, coordination with HQ seems only limited to one-sided requests from HQ on reporting.

Despite the stated weaknesses, in comparison to the previous NAP, the mechanisms of coordination are more effective and cooperation between levels has advanced.

#### iv. Impact of the merger

The evaluation found that the FCDO has encountered continuing challenges in implementing the NAP, including levels of motivation and staff morale. **The Division has undergone a significant period of organizational change due to the consolidation of FCO and DFID into a single department**. This period of change, which is still very much ongoing, has included internal staff rotation and the reassignment of key staff with gender expertise. The impact of the merger and the ensuing cut and loss of staff coupled with overall issues related to a lack of strategic direction has contributed to low morale among staff.

#### c) Resourcing

##### i. Financial

##### (a) Financing the WPS agenda on the international stage

Internationally, the UK continues to fund WPS at significant levels. **The UK remains one of the largest donors and supports civil society women peacebuilders and NGOs at the grassroots level** including funding to UN Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN), and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). The UK is at the forefront of directing humanitarian funding to women, peace, and security. In 2020, Lord Ahmad announced the UK's £1.3 million contribution to the Global Survivors Fund, launched by Nadia Murad and her fellow Nobel Laureate Dr. Mukwege.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (2018-2022): Annual Report to Parliament 2019.

Last year, as the Co-Chair of the OCHA Pooled Fund Working Group, the UK was instrumental in ensuring improvements in key programming areas for the Funds, notably gender inclusion, which resulted in further guidelines on gender equality for Country-based Pooled Funds (CBPFs).

*"In 2018/19, the CSSF Multilateral Championing our Values Programme continued to support efforts to stamp out SEA within the UN system with a further \$1m during the fiscal year 2018/2019 bringing our total to \$3 million over the last three years."*

### **UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018-2022: Annual Report to Parliament 2018**

#### *(b) Financing the implementation of the UK NAP*

**The lack of dedicated resources for NAP implementation and lack of tracking mechanisms on UK spending on WPS continue to be a challenge to meet internal-facing commitments** on training, process, and monitoring. Furthermore, stakeholders in the Gender and Children in Conflict Team and Human Security Team, as well as in country posts noted that they did not have the time or resources to engage more actively in bilateral engagements with partner countries. This is **further exacerbated by the recent ODA cuts and has resulted in low morale among staff.**

**For focus countries, the lack of resourcing and a dedicated budget for WPS is hindering their ability and commitment to deliver on the implementation of the NAP.** While the NAP lays out strong ambitions for focus countries, in practice, it does not come with any additional human, financial and technical resources to match these commitments. For the posts, being a focus country is viewed as an additional administrative burden with little added value to their work.

*"Initially, the posts were really committed. But without money, the posts are less and less engaged. Without money, we are seeing fewer and fewer projects. We do a lot of great work with development but overall, it is hard to get the buy-in from the senior leadership at posts who are not engaged as much. The cuts did impact how we can mainstream the NAP in other programming."*

#### **Interview with HMG Staff**

##### **ii. Technical resources**

**The Gender and Children in Conflict Team has developed various technical tools to support colleagues across missions and at the HQ level.** For example, Helpdesk experts are available to the missions, and there is a connection to a range of academic centers.

In addition, in 2018, the WPS Working Group commissioned a series of six guidance notes for use by HMG staff in policy and programme teams to design, commission, implement and monitor WPS programming. However, the launching of the guidance notes has been repeatedly delayed due to resourcing issues and the sixth guidance note was only released in June 2022.

According to some interviewees, technical expertise varies on WPS issues, with some areas better understood than others. For instance, understanding protection and sexual and gender-based violence are stronger than conflict prevention.

COVID-19 has had a severe impact on WPS training. Whilst some WPS training was moved online, the intensive “Gender, Conflict and Stability” was not. **The evaluation reveals that many staff at posts had not received specific training on Women, Peace, and Security.**

### iii. Human resources

The evaluation identified broad gaps in human resourcing to support NAP implementation and engagement. **At the HQ level, while the Gender and Children in Conflict Team is instrumental in mainstreaming WPS priorities** across departments and country missions, it would likely need to double its capacity to meet the needs more actively from the posts. At the field mission level, the **very few dedicated gender and social development advisors are too stretched across multiple and competing priorities** to meaningfully engage directly in the NAP implementation. This has been exacerbated following the cuts in staff resulting from the merger.

*“We lost some roles and functions/ loss of capacities that were not replaced in terms of policy development and training and expert programme design, and we LOST that – they run the gender and conflict training course that has disappeared.”*

### Interview with HMG Staff

#### d) Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

**The lack of a systematic monitoring and analysis mechanism for NAP implementation was identified as a particular area of concern for WPS stakeholders.** There is no standardized M&E framework. **Most respondents described the current NAP reporting and M&E systems as somewhat limiting.** For example, the UN UK Mission described a gap in evaluating the value of their work at the UN, as work in multilateral contexts is very different than in country contexts. Specifically, the work they do to try to influence other Member States and shape international responses to crises and how they impact women are not captured in the

current system. The UK Mission in Geneva does not even currently report on their WPS activities in NAP annual reports.

*i. The role of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group*

*“The NAP will facilitate continuous lesson learning between teams and departments, led by the cross government Working Group on WPS. Monitoring data will highlight gaps and areas of opportunity for policy and programme teams to respond to. The Working Group will seek to identify instances of best practice as well as emerging challenges and share this across departments, including with the overseas network.”*

**UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security  
2018-2022**

Stakeholders spoke positively of the Whitehall meetings. In recent years, a few examples of the Cross-Whitehall working group being a platform for partners to engage in strategic collaboration around the NAP were identified in the document review. For example, in 2019, the UK’s focus has been to support and strengthen the revision of the EU Strategic Approach on WPS, which members of the cross-Whitehall Working Group have reviewed and offered amendments to.<sup>66</sup> However, it appears the **Inter-Ministerial Cross Whitehall Working Group has not been an effective forum for strategic collaboration between implementing partners.**

*“We have a Cross Whitehall working group which needs to be more than just updates. But we do not have exchanges and cross-learning and sharing, and knowledge and lessons learned – there isn’t much cross coordination, all have become quite siloed!”*

**Interview with HMG Staff**

With a few exceptions, they appear to be more of a forum for the sharing of updates rather than for facilitating strategic discussions about linkages between their work and the NAP.

*ii. Indicators*

Indicators were selected on the criteria that they were publicly available and used across focus countries with the goal that they would be easy to access by country teams. By doing so, it also meant that they were designing a **MEL that was not about accountability or about attributing any kind of change to the UK**. As a result, many

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<sup>66</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (2018-2022): Annual Report to Parliament 2019.

**indicators were ignored and appeared irrelevant to the work of the missions.** Many stakeholders were not aware of NAP indicators corresponding to their work.

**Figure 11- Example of indicators<sup>67</sup>**

Strategic outcome 3: <b>Gender-based violence</b>	
An increase in the number and scale of interventions that integrate effective measures to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, particularly violence against women and girls which is the most prevalent form of gender-based violence.	
Internationally, data gathering on the prevalence of gender-based violence and measures to prevent and respond to it is inadequate. No data is currently gathered systematically across the nine focus countries which could be used to measure progress against this outcome. Data gathering in these issues is challenging, particularly in fragile contexts. The indicators included here are ones the UK government will seek to gather data against where possible in the focus countries where it works on these issues. The UK also continues to advocate for better data gathering internationally on this issue, including through the Sustainable Development Goals.	
Indicator	Indicator source
Proportion of ever-partnered / married women and girls aged 15-49 years who report being subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months	Demographic and Health Surveys
Proportion of women and girls aged 15-49 years who report being subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months	Demographic and Health Surveys
Proportion of women and men (aged 15-49 years) who agree that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife under at least one specified circumstance	Demographic and Health Surveys
Proportion of VAWG survivors who accessed specified response service who were satisfied that the service met their needs: (i) Police; (ii) Justice / courts; (iii) Health / medical services; (iv) Shelter; (v) Psychosocial support; (vi) socio-economic re-integration	New

*a. Annual reports to Parliament and GAPS shadow reports*

For the annual reports, country teams are invited to broadly report on the situation in the countries without making any real link to the NAP or the contribution of the UK. **Because of the lack of mechanisms to assess the impact or share lessons learned, the Annual report is perceived as a bureaucratic burden for country teams.**

*“Annual reports do not illustrate impact or get a sense of what works. It does not show how well we are doing. “*

**Interview with HMG Staff**

The annual reports to the Parliament are the only mechanism for civil society to hold the government accountable. Civil society shadow reports have been highly critical to address the lack of information available on the UK's progress against the NAP implementation plan.

**The lack of MEL beyond the annual report has been a cause for concern, hindering the opportunities for actors to learn to from each other and to adapt the NAP to shifting contexts.** This gap in recording WPS achievements suggests a blind spot in reporting on WPS efforts and achievements, and ultimately limits the UK's capacity to

<sup>67</sup> UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (2018-2022).



contribute to the global evidence base on what works and what does not work in advancing a WPS agenda.

## **VI. CONCLUDING SUMMARY ANALYSIS**

The UK has been at the forefront of the global WPS agenda since its inception and it is undeniable that the NAP and its objectives remain central to its relevance as a WPS leader. The evaluation team was tasked to assess the impact of the NAP. Because of the lack of an M&E framework, there was no empirical evidence of the impact of the NAP activities on the situation of women and girls in conflict-affected countries. In addition, the NAP is predominantly outward-looking and the domestication of the WPS agenda is largely absent. As a result, there is little evidence of the impact of the NAP on domestic policy.

However, the case studies have identified many examples of how the NAP has been successful in advancing the implementation of the WPS agenda across the world. In terms of strategic expertise, the UK is a respected actor and is valued beyond financial contributions. The role of the UK in promoting the WPS agenda, including its work pushing for gender-responsive peacekeeping and its commitment to support civil society participation, makes the UK one of the leading actors in promoting the WPS agenda in international forums. At the country level, the UK is well-positioned to take on a leadership role because of its engagement in peace processes and its expertise in WPS. In its next NAP, the UK should leverage these 'value-add' areas to carve a deeper niche for its engagement on WPS.

The evaluation identified several fundamental elements that have been missing from the NAP from the start. The absence of an applied theory of change (not just as a conceptual framework, but as an operational tool that could inform implementation) and M&E framework resulted in the NAP not being seen as an operational tool but as a high-level document with limited utility for staff in their day-to-day work. Interviews in-country case studies and at HQ have revealed that most staff were not clear on the NAP's relevance to their work or were not aware of its content. Nonetheless, for the staff already committed to WPS, the NAP has been a useful tool for staff in legitimizing the attention of senior officials to WPS and maintaining traction on WPS priorities in their departments.

Despite the stated weaknesses, compared to the previous NAPs, the implementation mechanisms are considerably more effective. The Strategic Outcomes are perceived as relevant and a good model for clearly listing priority engagements. They have been useful in giving sufficient flexibility to country posts to guide their country plans. Thanks to the work of the Gender and Children in Conflict Team and Human Security



Team, coordination between the MOD and FCDO has advanced in the last two years. The relevance and significance of the WPS agenda are recognized and understood more within implementing agencies. Because of the ongoing FCO - DFID merger, the departments have undergone a period of organizational change which has stalled the progress in NAP coordination and implementation. Interviews pointed to the lack of human and financial resources in the Gender and Children in Conflict Team and Human Security Team, as well as in focus countries, as a major impediment to the successful implementation of the NAP.

The goals in the NAP were set relatively ambitiously, showing great commitment at the ministerial level to take the WPS agenda forward. However, at the technical level, the funds, human and institutional resources never matched these commitments to ensure successful implementation. These challenges, coupled with the lack of practical guidance on how to realize the objectives, led to internal inconsistencies and difficulties for staff to meaningfully deliver on the UK WPS commitments.

## **VII. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A. FOSTER AN INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY PROCESS FROM THE OUTSET**

1. Clarify priorities for WPS for the fifth NAP through a structured, participatory, and consultative process, ensuring input from implementing departments including the Home Office and other domestic MDAs. Continue to foster 'critical friend' relationships with civil society stakeholders, including in the consultation inputs for the next NAP, as well as throughout the cycle of its design and development.
2. Strengthen political buy-in for the NAP and WPS agenda at an elevated level. Identify senior stakeholders within the UK Government, including at a ministerial level, who could have an interest in the WPS agenda. Devise a clear strategy for engaging them, yet at the same time focus on ensuring a more institutional approach so that the next NAP is not driven as much by the priorities of individual ministers.
3. Raise awareness of the NAP and engage mission staff in dialogue to increase the relevance of the future NAP on the ground, as well as gain valuable input and collaboration from staff. From sharing this evaluation, to seeking their inputs into the next NAP, to designing capacity-building and mentoring opportunities, pay more detailed attention to the needs and abilities of the missions to understand and use the NAP in their operations more explicitly.

4. Take into consideration the previous experiences and best practices of other donor countries, particularly relating to the domestication of the WPS agenda at home. Organize exchanges to learn from more strategic attempts to answer the 'how to apply' the NAPs principles within the UK, as well as a clearer sense of domestic MDAs and local CSOs to better understand the transformative potential of the WPS agenda within the UK.

## **B. THEMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***1. Women's Leadership and Full, Equal and Meaningful Participation in Peace and Political Processes***

While it is already a priority in the current UK NAP, there were several suggestions that increasing women's participation should remain a priority in the next NAP and that it may be an issue that needs to be fast-tracked, including by:

- a) Using UK political capital to ensure inclusive selection measures for women's participation in traditional and non-traditional contexts.
- b) Providing funding for CSOs to participate in important international fora, especially at the UN and other key policy spaces.
- c) Ensuring women's participation is prominent in all missions and peacekeeping civilian mandates (linking women's leadership and protection of civilian's work to create the enabling environment for women to participate in political and peace processes.
- d) Thinking beyond numbers and looking to support women's participation in informal spaces (including women's CSOs and local women peacebuilders) and linking them to formal processes.

### ***2. Women's Leadership and Full, Equal and Meaningful Participation in Peacebuilding and Peacekeeping***

- a) Support peacebuilding work and communities that are already doing this work.
- b) Prioritize transitions from peacekeeping to peacebuilding and how to maintain progress to avoid a vacuum after the departure of peacekeeping missions (link with the Peacebuilding Commission).
- c) There is a mechanism for reporting on human security headed by the Vice Chief of Defence; there would be utility in delegating some authority to them and have them report on the NAP as well.

- d) In terms of addressing the obstacles in increasing the number of women in UK deployments of peacekeepers, it was recommended to focus on some quick wins that are simple yet still experiencing push back, like the Mission in Cyprus.

### ***3. Revisit the Country Focus Model***

- a) From the perspective of peacekeeping, consider having a slightly different model that could include more and alternative countries – perhaps strategic objectives could have their own countries so PKJU could then better tailor their implementation.
- b) The NAP focus country model needs to be more flexible and expand beyond the UK's conflict and stabilization teams into a broader WPS lens, perhaps with a high emphasis on fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCAS).

### ***4. Continue and Expand UK Support to NAP Development Processes in Partner Countries***

The evaluation has identified some key lessons for future UK support to NAP development processes. These include:

- a) Take the time to raise awareness and clear misconceptions around WPS issues, including advocating for the wider societal value of women's participation, both within government, as well as within communities.
- b) Approach issues of gender from a context specific and conflict-sensitive perspective with the understanding that diverse cultures and generations may have different conceptions of terms and ideas, particularly in the MENA region where 'gender' remains a sensitive subject and is often seen as a foreign agenda.
- c) Ensure that the NAP has local buy-in and support, is costed and dedicated funding is allocated before embarking on ratification.
- d) Strategy alone is not sufficient to bring about lasting change; a roadmap and theory of change are required as well.

## **C. OPERATIONALIZE THE NAP**

### ***1. Clarify the Overall Vision and Strategic Direction***

- a) At the outset of the fifth NAP, hold policy committee discussions in all implementing partner departments to ensure mid/upper working-level management understands and agrees on the importance of the Action Plan

itself as the main WPS tool that will inform and guide specific programmatic and diplomatic interventions.

- b) Identify some key interventions that are currently seen by partners and the staff as having potential for major contributions to impact and plan to invest more strategically in developing such efforts further – for example, as described above, support for other countries as they develop and implement their own NAPs or the engagements with women mediators, especially at the local levels etc.
- c) Ensure that the NAP clearly articulates change at two levels:
  - i. Change achieved through the different departments' missions and core responsibilities that aims to contribute, via a logical form, on an impact level, in different geographic regions, including in the UK itself.
  - ii. Change various MDAs and various parts of FCDO aim to attribute to their own work via core initiatives and main interventions, however prioritized (including needed amendments to the focus country model).
- d) The emphasis needs to shift from questions of “*why*” this matters overall and “*what*” the Action Plan aims to achieve to more “*how*” each department plays a role, both strategically and operationally. In addition, from the very outset, attention should be given to the ‘*so what*’ lens of articulating changes at various levels that more clearly shows the direction of (hopefully measurable) change the NAP wants to achieve.
- e) Have a more strategic “whole of society” change in mind when you design these interventions. For example, be more thoughtful, and more explicit on facilitating civil society engagement with the security sector, balancing both the supply side (more women in the police, for example) with the demand side of helping increase democratic governance and transparent forms of policing in countries that receive that form of security assistance.

## **2. Align the NAP with UK's Foreign Policy Framework**

- a) Clarify how the NAP adds value and aligns with the other branches of the UK's Foreign Policy (and possibly with domestic policy frameworks, given the desire to bring more domestic focus on the fifth NAP). While some significant overlaps might exist across various commitments, it is critical to communicate the relevance more directly as the NAP:
  - i. Specifically focuses on the implementation of the WPS agenda.
  - ii. Reflects the need to emphasize women's leadership and agency.

- iii. Designates clear supplementary outcomes/contributions that are currently not covered in great detail by other strategies, policies, or plans (for example, the NAP can focus on the connection between climate, conflict, and women's roles at the grassroots level).
  - iv. Provides the opportunity to expand on the human security frameworks that build stronger links between traditional security and the role of the security sector with emerging issues like climate change, pandemics or radicalization and extremism.
  - v. Allows for operational linkages across programming, advocacy, and diplomacy intervention.
  - vi. Aligns well with the MEL framework that can innovate and promote the reflections, learning and feedback loop to various missions to both validate and/or course-correct when needed.
- b) Map existing policies and commitments at the level of the mission and investigate how the NAP fits within their other policy commitments and strategy on gender equality, peace, and security.

### ***3. Clarify Roles and Responsibilities of All Implementing Partners***

To facilitate the NAP implementation and cooperation between implementing partners, the roles and responsibilities of all involved actors should be clearly defined.

- a) Assess the work of implementing partners on WPS issues, existing human and financial resources and persistent gaps and needs. This is the opportunity for the government to reflect on what is already being done, identify future priorities and opportunities and ensure policy sustainability.
- b) Terms of Reference should be developed to outline in specific terms the roles and responsibilities of all involved actors.
- c) Roles and responsibilities should be specified with a clear timeline for the implementation of activities.
- d) Establish a strategy to sustain and increase support for NAP objectives in each department and secure political commitment from the leadership throughout the implementation phase.
- e) Elaborate an evidence-based strategic guidance, aligned with the department's current priorities to guide the delivery of the NAP by missions.

#### ***4. Define the Log Frame as a Tool for Planning, Implementing and Monitoring***

- a) Engage in strategic reflection with implementing partners to develop a NAP that provides strategic guidance for the implementation at tactical levels.
- b) Develop a systematic monitoring, evaluation and learning framework for the NAP, which is implemented and followed.
- c) Clearly articulate the link between the outcome contribution to this agenda at the higher level and the clear and direct operational linkages to the NAP itself.
- d) Using the Results-Based Management methodology, the NAP should include a logical framework that clearly states:
  - i. the intended results at the outcome (long-term changes desired in the broader systems).
  - ii. mid-term outcomes (tangible contributions to the specific objectives with more specific statements of systemic changes).
  - iii. as well as outputs – the most concrete results that Ministries, Agencies, and Departments (MDAs) intend to accomplish, and whose completion will logically contribute to the higher-level changes stated above.
- e) To ensure a consistent understanding of the logical framework among implementing partners, adopt a Theory of Change approach to underpin the NAP. A Theory of Change can demonstrate the links and underlying assumptions about how change happens and how the planned activities can influence that change.

#### **D. COORDINATION**

- 1. Expand the role of the Whitehall working group and ensure better participation from senior leadership. The group could build a greater sense of collaboration, learning and accountability through shared activities such as co-facilitating workshops or learning forums, or co-producing learning outputs related to NAP engagements.
- 2. Maintain frequent communication between MOD and FCDO through periodic workshops, reporting meetings or other convening mechanisms to share knowledge and identify challenges and lessons and areas for any necessary course corrections.

3. Formalize interdepartmental and intradepartmental collaboration to ensure that objectives, policies, and programmes are coordinated, and areas of concentration and possible duplication are identified.
4. Establish internal mechanisms such as focal points or WPS champions in departments to assist in mainstreaming a gender perspective and WPS into policies and ensure continuity in policy commitments.

## **E. INVEST IN CAPACITY-BUILDING**

1. Make internal capacity-building and training on WPS and gender mainstreaming available to FCDO and MOD HQ and mission staff.
2. Invest in the capacity-building of staff. There should be a minimum standard for onboarding requirements that could focus on two aspects:
  - a) Substantive issues: the new landscape of the WPS agenda, including how it intersects with emerging issues like climate change, migration, illicit drugs and arms trade, pandemics, etc.
  - b) The operational approach:
    - i) Better connect policy/programme people who are not linked with their own Departments' M&E staff, etc.
    - ii) Provide more comprehensive and better training on gender-sensitive indicators.
    - iii) Develop implementation plans collaborating with the staff responsible for quantitative reporting.

## **F. RESOURCING**

1. Take steps to make WPS funding more strategic to enhance impact, focusing on lessons learned regarding what works, what does not, under which contexts, and which programming modalities.
2. Conduct a costing exercise for NAP WPS to identify funding gaps and to request relevant resources from development partners, including technical, expertise and other assistance.
3. Dedicate funding to the NAP implementation through the earmarking of funds. This will allow for consistency in accomplishing identified objectives, rather than conducting activities on an ad-hoc basis.
4. Apply gender-responsive budgeting and planning to track budgetary allocations and for monitoring and conducting evidence-based advocacy.

5. Strengthen human resources of both the Gender and Children in Conflict Team and Human Security Team, as well as the teams in focus countries to support the WPS agenda and oversee UK's engagement, for example, by recruiting a gender adviser or appointing an existing staff member with gender expertise as a focal point.
6. Ensure that the Gender and Children in Conflict Team and Human Security Team have sufficient governmental support and human and financial resources to support the NAP implementation and assist the different ministries in delivering on their NAP commitments.
7. Thematic recommendations
  - a) Provide more support to local NGOs that work with women on the ground rather than through the UN or embassies.
  - b) Invest in the general capacity of OHCHR in New York to support their work on reprisals.
  - c) Analyse the impact of the Overseas Development Aid cuts and how much they have impacted delivery of WPS programming.
  - d) Consider consulting CSOs over the restrictions and challenges they may be facing in applying and/or implementing funding from the CSSF stream for WPS.

## **G. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING**

1. Revitalize the Inter-Ministerial Working Group with a clear Terms of Reference, defining its role in M&E and accountability to internal and external stakeholders. This needs to be accompanied by adequate resourcing.
2. Establish new targets and outcome-level indicators, accompanied by an elaboration of these indicators – how they are understood, and the data collection tools and methodologies.
3. Indicators need to be grounded in the respective mandates and activities of MDAs with a specific focus on their own outputs, as well as an understanding of shared contributions to higher level changes that might cut across different mandates.
4. Ideally, there will be several joint sessions with both programme/policy and M&E staff across departments to review the indicators, assess their value, look at the gaps, share challenges, and most importantly improve the indicators through such consultative exercises. It is imperative that this work commences as soon



as possible as strategic outcomes are identified and various MDAs start to understand their roles and contributions.

5. Additionally, it is advisable to institute a set of qualitative indicators to track a level of change over time in attitudes, norms, and behaviors - either at the specific country or the regional level or focus on specific themes or issues. Develop targeted partnerships with academic institutions both within and outside the UK.