TRANSF◯RM

**The Women, Peace and
Security National Action
Plans Issue**

Why evaluate UN Women's support
to national action plans on women,
peace and security?

How relevant, effective, efficient
and sustainable is the work of UN
Women on Women, Peace and
Security National Action Plans?

Eight ways to strengthen the
support of UN Women to national
action plans on women, peace and
security

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 21st issue of Transform! This issue focuses on a critical area of work for gender equality and women's empowerment: the development of national action plans on women, peace and security (WPS NAPs).

United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, together with nine subsequent resolutions, has been the central framework for tackling the many challenges that women face in conflict settings. Over the last decade, UN Women has played a crucial role in supporting the development and implementation of WPS NAPs as the main tool by which global WPS frameworks are translated into concrete strategies, actions and outcomes at the national level.

In 2020, UN Women's Independent Evaluation Service (IES) conducted an evaluation of UN Women's support to the development and implementation processes of WPS NAPs, assessing coherence and coordination, effectiveness, organizational efficiency, sustainability and the extent to which a human rights approach and gender equality principles were integrated in order to meet WPS commitments and adopt accountability frameworks in conflict and post-conflict countries.

The evaluation found that UN Women has been effective in facilitating processes that build awareness of and consensus on WPS NAPs at the national level and strongly contribute to their adoption. This work has helped to lay the foundation for transformative change in gender equality and human rights.

We hope this issue of Transform increases awareness and understanding of the importance of WPS NAPs as a tool for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment commitments, as well as UN Women's contributions to these efforts. The evaluation will help UN Women strengthen its work in this area, while also contributing to organizational learning and accountability.

Inga Sniukaite

Chief, Independent Evaluation Service
Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS)

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ON THE COVER Members of the Guatemalan contingent of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) participate in a medal award ceremony in recognition of their service.

Photo ©UN Photo/Marco Dormino

National action plans on women, peace and security:

the work of UN Women

Photo ©UN Women/Ryan Brown

Over the last two decades, United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (WPS) has been the central framework for addressing challenges faced by women in conflict settings, along with nine subsequent supporting resolutions in this area.

National action plans (NAPs) for implementation of WPS objectives are the main mechanisms by which global WPS frameworks are translated into concrete strategies, actions and outcomes at the national level. Responsibility for implementation of WPS NAPs lies with national governments as outlined in resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions. As of November 2020, 92 United Nations Member States and territories had adopted a NAP on WPS, while several regional and subregional organizations also developed regional action plans for implementation of resolution 1325.

UN Women plays a pivotal role in WPS objectives at the global, regional and national levels. Globally, UN Women provides leadership, knowledge-sharing and advocacy on WPS and coordinates United Nations system work in this area. At the regional level, UN Women supports an enabling environment for regional and subregional organizations to advance WPS objectives. At the national level, UN Women helps countries develop, implement, monitor and review their WPS NAPs by providing coordination, technical expertise, guidance and tools, as well as sharing lessons and best practices.

UN Women makes significant financial investments in WPS, specifically related to work on NAPs. During 2015–2019, UN Women's expenditure on its Strategic Output 4.1/4.1.2, 'WPS commitments and accountability frameworks adopted and implemented in conflict and post-conflict situations', was estimated to be US$ 88 million, while the amount budgeted was estimated at US$ 114 million. Ninety-six per cent of this funding came from non-core resources.

What methods and tools are available to advance gender-responsive evaluation?

How can we empower rights holders and maximize their participation?

What can we learn from successful gender-responsive evaluation approaches?

GOOD PRACTICES IN GENDER-RESPONSIVE EVALUATIONS

Download the interactive PDF here

GOOD PRACTICES
in Gender-Responsive Evaluations

UN WOMEN

Why evaluate UN Women's support to *national action plans on women, peace and security?*

Are we getting it right?

Does our support positively change the lives of women, girls, men and boys and contribute to gender equality?

Are we working on a scale that makes a difference for gender equality?

To get better results, we need to know what works. We also need to know what doesn't work and how to fix it.

The Independent Evaluation Service of UN Women's Independent Evaluation and Audit Services undertook a corporate evaluation of the organization's support to national action plans on women, peace and security (WPS NAPS).

The evaluation focused on support to NAP development and implementation processes in order to meet WPS commitments and adopt accountability frameworks in conflict and post-conflict countries. UN Women's work in this area was assessed across the organization's integrated mandate: normative, operational and coordination work at the country, regional and global levels. The evaluation focused on the period 2015–2019 and covered results from the UN Women Strategic Plan 2014–2018 and the first two years of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

Photo © UN Women/Ryan Brown

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

Assess the **relevance** and coherence; **effectiveness** and organizational efficiency; and **sustainability** of UN Women's global, regional and national work to support WPS NAPs development and implementation processes
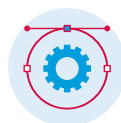
Identify a menu of evidence of **what works and what doesn't** work in terms of UN Women's support to NAPs development and implementation to facilitate choices about future investments

Analyse how **human rights** perspectives and **gender equality principles** are integrated into UN Women's support to WPS NAPs development and implementation processes

Identify **lessons learned** and provide action-oriented **recommendations** to solidify UN Women's work in this area

In addition to these objectives, the focus of the evaluation was expanded during the inception phase to include a light-touch assessment of the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for WPS and the work of UN Women in this area.

The primary intended users of the evaluation are the UN Women Executive Board, UN Women senior management, and programme staff at the global, regional and country levels. The evaluation is also intended to be useful for other actors working on WPS, including partner governments, international and national non-governmental organizations, civil society, United Nations agencies and development partners.

EXPERT'S VIEW

Charlotte Goemans

Policy Analyst, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Team, Development Co-operation Directorate, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

As the technical lead on gender equality in fragile and conflict-affected contexts at the Development Co-operation Directorate of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), I was invited to provide feedback on the corporate evaluation of UN Women's support to national action plans on women, peace and security. Prior to joining the OECD, I had worked for different United Nations agencies, including in sub-Saharan African countries affected by conflict and fragility. These experiences have taught me the importance of bringing out perspectives from the field and assessing the impact of our work on the ground.

The evaluation is of great importance to OECD because it gives us additional evidence to further the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda through policy dialogue with members of the Development Assistance Committee and its subsidiary bodies on gender equality (GenderNet) and conflict and fragility .(Our own OECD analysis indicates that while Development Assistance Committee aid in support of gender equality in fragile contexts has increased rapidly, it falls far short of the political commitments that governments have made.) The evaluation can give us more leverage to hold our members accountable and adequately support them to deliver on their political commitments on WPS.

I greatly value the partnership with UN Women on the implementation of the WPS agenda. The OECD-UN Women event Partnerships for Implementing Impact-Driven National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security in the Context of COVID-19, organized in the framework of the sixty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, was a good opportunity to show our joint commitment to the WPS agenda and disseminate the findings of our research to a wider audience.

UN WOMEN RAPID ASSESSMENT TOOL

To Evaluate Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Results In Humanitarian Contexts

Download the interactive PDF here

How relevant, coherent, effective, efficient and sustainable is UN Women's support to *national action plans on women, peace and security?*

1 UN Women's support to national action plans on women, peace and security is strongly grounded in SDGs 5 and 16 and in an understanding of local women, peace and security priorities and contexts, allowing UN Women to advance these global goals in a contextually relevant way.

UN Women used multiple strategies to understand the priorities of local stakeholders and to align its support to the country context. These strategies were effective and ensured that UN Women's NAP work was relevant in a variety of contexts and was able to address different types of WPS challenges. These strategies included working closely with government and civil society stakeholders on NAPs: for example, in Kyrgyzstan engagement with civil society increased the local relevance of UN Women's NAP work. Supporting national entities also led to NAP development, as in Uganda, where UN Women emphasized strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Gender to lead the NAP process. Connecting NAP work with wider national plans and processes was another strategy for alignment with local contexts. In Tunisia, UN Women's support was well aligned to existing government plans. Similarly, learning from previous NAP processes was vital. In Nepal, taking account of lessons from the first NAP helped to increase the national relevance of UN Women's support to the second NAP.

Connecting NAP work with wider national plans and processes was another strategy for alignment with local contexts.

COUNTRY SNAPSHOT: TUNISIA

In Tunisia, UN Women's support for NAP development was well aligned to existing government plans and strategies related to gender, including the National Strategy for the Economic and Social Empowerment of Women and Girls in Rural Areas 2017–2020 and the implementation of the women, family and childhood sectoral anti-terrorism plan within the NAP. A separate evaluation of UN Women's work in the region determined that the process to develop Tunisia's NAP was highly relevant to the national context, and that it complemented the existing government plans as well as other stakeholders' plans in the country.

In Uganda, the training provided on linkages between WPS and other normative frameworks during the NAP consultation process was a key factor in facilitating alignment.

UN Women's support was closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals framework in all countries. In addition, the evaluation found alignment between UN Women's NAP support and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in a number of countries, including examples where CEDAW or the Beijing Platform for Action were effectively used as an overarching framework to advocate for WPS objectives.

The evaluation found that UN Women's NAP work could be better aligned to a broader set of normative frameworks at both the global and regional levels, and that achieving such alignment requires building knowledge and commitment about these frameworks and their relevance to WPS. For example,

in Uganda, the training provided on linkages between WPS and other normative frameworks during the NAP consultation process was a key factor in facilitating alignment. Still the evaluation found that more could be done to link national and regional plans and processes. An important factor that could further advance WPS objectives at the regional level, and potentially be more successful, would be to enhance the strength and effectiveness of the regional institutions themselves, including with adequate staffing, financing and technical expertise. This suggests that UN Women's work at the regional level could be more strategic in assessing when and how engagement with regional bodies and processes could add value and whether such engagement is worth investing in.

Photo ©Tine Frank/USAID

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UN Women's normative and coordination activities in support of national action plans on women, peace and security are the most visible and valued by all stakeholders.

UN Women was widely recognized as playing a unique role in the normative and coordination aspects of NAPs and in adding significant value in these areas. However, there was limited reflection at the organizational and field levels on how the different roles that UN Women plays in relation to NAPs can operate in synergy to generate greater impact.

At country level, UN Women's inclusive approach, strong convening power and neutrality enabled it to effectively fulfil its coordination mandate in the area of WPS NAPs. At the global level, UN Women's normative role allowed it to lead on WPS within the global policy space, as well as establish standards for national NAP processes. However, there was less recognition among stakeholders of UN Women's operational role and activities in support of NAPs.

The evaluation found that there is significant value in UN Women's mandate to support all Member States, across all levels of development and in all regions on NAPs, as this gives the organization traction and influence over WPS in all countries, including development partner countries, at their request. However, the importance of this mandate was only recognized by global-level actors, suggesting it is less visible to actors at the national level.

GOOD PRACTICES: integrated approaches to normative, coordination and operational/programming work

KYRGYZSTAN

In Kyrgyzstan, UN Women's normative mandate guides its NAP work, while its operational mandate provides specific programmes and projects. Linkages between WPS and the economic development–peace nexus are starting to be made, with stakeholders viewing this integrated approach as a positive step.
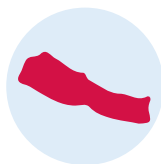
NEPAL

A decentralized evaluation (2016) of the UN Women managed project *Strengthening Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Nepal (SIWPSAN)* found that UN Women's integrated mandate gave the organisation a comparative advantage in WPS because of its ability to work on and integrate normative, operational and coordination dimensions.

UGANDA

UN Women in Uganda adopted an integrated approach to coordination, policy support and programme development across organizational thematic areas. For the WPS NAP, each pillar was linked to a different thematic area, e.g. prevention, participation (governance), protection and recovery.

3

UN Women engages in external coordination at the national, regional and global levels. There is space to strengthen coherence between these levels to provide better support.

UN Women was perceived as having a clear mandate to lead coordination on WPS as well as being strong in this coordination role. The organization engaged in coordination at the national, regional and global levels, with the strongest focus on national-level coordination. This national coordination work included the mobilization of stakeholders and resources, as well as the establishment of NAP development processes and national coordination mechanisms. It generally involved leading three separate but interconnected coordination processes: coordination of national government, civil society organizations and other national stakeholders; coordination of United Nations system engagement; and

coordination of development partners. An example of successful national-level coordination is the establishment of the Friends of WPS in Mali, an informal group of like-minded development partners focused on promoting the WPS agenda. This group met regularly to share information and develop common strategies on WPS and was also key in generating external funding for NAP implementation.

At the regional and global levels, UN Women coordinated knowledge generation and exchange, standardization of approaches, and, to a lesser extent, resource mobilization and funding. The extent and efficacy of UN Women's regional coordination work varied between regions and appeared to be heavily

dependent on WPS capacity at the regional office. UN Women regional offices coordinated some regional interaction on WPS and NAPs among different sets of stakeholders in the Middle East and North Africa, South East Asia and the Western Balkans. UN Women's global-level coordination role was primarily focused on wider WPS objectives, with less reference to NAPs specifically, and included participation in global-level coordination and funding mechanisms related to WPS.

The evaluation concluded that more could be done to strengthen, extend and connect the different elements of UN Women's external coordination on NAPs by developing synergies with a wide range of actors.

COUNTRY SNAPSHOT: MALI

In Mali, UN Women initiated the Friends of WPS group to promote and advance the WPS agenda. Comprised of different stakeholders working on WPS in the country, the informal group met at least once per month for knowledge exchange and collaboration on issues including development and implementation of the NAP on resolution 1325. UN Women staff reported that this group was critical for engaging development partners, who were regularly updated on the group's work.

4

UN Women is effective in facilitating national processes related to national action plans on women, peace and security that build awareness and consensus and strongly contribute to the adoption of such plans.

In most contexts, UN Women plays a unique and effective role in bringing together multiple actors and providing neutral convening spaces for dialogue on WPS and NAPs, with the organization's inclusive approach and neutrality having enabled it to undertake this role. These processes generate commitment and awareness of WPS issues among a wide range of stakeholders, allow discussion of sensitive issues and build consensus for NAPs. For example, in Guatemala the NAP process facilitated by UN Women opened up new spaces for dialogue, increased awareness of WPS and stimulated institutional changes.

UN Women's convening role enabled it to increase awareness of WPS objectives and of context-specific WPS issues. These included issues related to the pursuit of recognition and justice for victims and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Nepal and Guatemala and the gendered implications of preventing violent extremism among youth in Kyrgyzstan, as well as women's participation in the management of water resources, the role of women mediators and the value of community conflict resolution in a number of countries. UN Women's convening work on NAPs also supported the development of important relationships among different stakeholders, which could then be used to advance wider WPS objectives. For example, in Guatemala, the NAP process convened by UN Women

provided a basis for civil society to later engage with government actors outside this process and advocate for issues such as reparations for victims and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

UN Women's strong relationship with civil society, women's machineries and other sectors involved in contributing to gender equality was recognized as adding value to WPS NAP development and implementation. However, while UN Women field presences generally had a good relationship with actors in sectors involved in advancing gender equality, they did not always have strong relationships with wider elements of state and society that are also important for advancing NAPs.

COUNTRY SNAPSHOT: GUATEMALA

Many stakeholders in Guatemala viewed the NAP development process itself as an achievement for gender equality and women's empowerment. Dialogues about the NAP provided an entry point and platform for activists to engage with the government, helping to mobilize action in the *Sepur Zarco* case, the first sentencing in a national court related to sexual violence during armed conflict. This result was considered transformative for the victims, allowing their voices to be heard and validated.

5

UN Women supports high-impact criteria for national action plans on women, peace and security, but this support does not always translate into effective plans due to external challenges beyond the control of UN Women.

The evaluation assessed the extent to which UN Women promotes the high-impact NAP criteria identified in the Global Study*. It found that UN Women focused most strongly on promoting the high-impact criteria of strong leadership and coordination and of inclusive NAP design processes and that it had been largely effective in doing so.

UN Women supported strong leadership and coordination for WPS through a range of strategies, including advocating for the establishment of national coordination bodies, identifying and building the capacity of key stakeholders within institutions who can drive NAP processes forward, and supporting the leadership of civil society organizations to perform an oversight, advocacy or implementation function in relation to NAPs. Particularly strong examples of UN Women's support for leadership and coordination were found in Afghanistan, Iraq, Nepal and Nigeria, as well as in Georgia, where a UN Women project succeeded in supporting the establishment of a national coordination mechanism to oversee NAP implementation. However, the high turnover of government officials and changes in government structures frequently hindered UN Women's efforts to develop strong leadership and coordination for NAPs.

UN Women supported inclusive NAP design processes, including by supporting long and complex NAP consultation processes to ensure the participation of relevant stakeholders and by promoting the participation of a wide range of actors. For example, the NAP development process in Uganda involved in-depth consultations with civil society and state partners, as well as with women survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, and engaged non-traditional stakeholders such as religious leaders. However, the evaluation found that there is room to further improve support for inclusivity, as poor security situations and weak regional-level capacity and infrastructure, both of which prevent outreach beyond capital cities, posed challenges in relation to inclusive NAP design processes.

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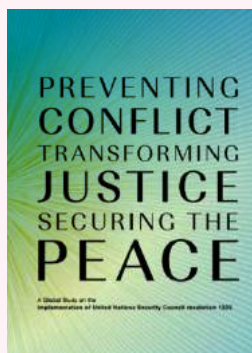
*UN WOMEN (2015) "PREVENTING CONFLICT, TRANSFORMING JUSTICE, SECURING THE PEACE: A GLOBAL STUDY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325."

The Global Study led by UN Women for the fifteenth anniversary of UNSCR 1325 examined the use of NAPs as a tool for advancing WPS objectives. It found that NAPs were frequently unrealistic or lacked the political commitment and resources required for implementation. The Global Study drew together lessons from civil society, and using criteria developed by Inclusive Security, identified the following key elements as necessary for the development of NAPs as a tool for coherent, targeted and impactful action: strong leadership and effective coordination, an inclusive design process, costing and allocated budgets for implementation, a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework, and flexibility to adapt to emerging situations. Given the strong evidence that these five factors are crucial for developing a high-quality NAP that is likely to be implemented, the evaluation used these factors as criteria to measure the effectiveness of UN Women's support to national NAP processes.

The evaluation found that UN Women's support for the other elements of a high-impact NAP was more mixed. UN Women supported costing and budgeting of NAPs in some contexts, primarily through organizing costing exercises and discussions and supporting the preparation of draft costing plans. However, such support rarely resulted in a costing plan being adopted by governments as an integral part of the NAP or translated into annual operational budgets of implementing institutions. This type of support became more prominent in the latest generation of NAPs.

UN Women supported the development of monitoring and evaluation frameworks within most NAP processes. However, a common pattern appears to be that, although such a framework was established, actual monitoring processes were weak due to limited capacity or commitment. The most widely used strategies by UN Women to advance monitoring and evaluation were providing technical and financial support for the development of guidelines and frameworks, and capacity-building for implementation of these frameworks. There was limited evidence of UN Women's support for the development of flexible NAPs or for adapting NAPs to respond to changing contexts, although in some cases NAPs were adjusted to changing situations.

While UN Women mostly supported high-impact NAP criteria, the extent to which such criteria were included in the final NAP is mediated by the complexity of context, the actors involved and the final decisions of governments. In particular, the inclusion of these criteria in the final NAP was often hindered by lack of financial resources, lack of political commitment, limited capacities of national stakeholders to manage the process and violent conflict. Other barriers included weak coordination among ministries, difficulty including stakeholders from outside the capital and major cities, and lack of institutional infrastructure to support localization.

GOOD PRACTICE:
Promoting high-impact NAP criteria in Uganda

STRONG LEADERSHIP AND EFFECTIVE COORDINATION

UN Women supported the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development to take the lead on NAP development, helping to establish a three-tiered coordination mechanism to oversee both NAP development and implementation. Stakeholders stated that with UN Women's support, the MoGLSD was enabled to effectively take charge and own the process. As one stakeholder reported, "UN Women has not taken away the role of the ministries, but they support the process and government to carry out its mandate."

INCLUSIVE DESIGN PROCESS

The inclusivity of the NAP development process in Uganda was praised across stakeholder categories, with many stating it was the most inclusive process they had ever been part of. UN Women helped to facilitate stakeholder mapping during the initial planning stage to ensure that no groups were left behind. Stakeholders that participated included various government ministries, local governments (Kitgum DLG, Bushenyi DLG), religious organizations (Interreligious Council of Uganda, Uganda Joint Christian Council), academics (Makere University/ Refugee Law project), donors (Norwegian embassy) and other UN agencies (UNFPA, UNDP, UNHCR).

COSTING AND BUDGETING

While pending finalization by the government, Uganda's third NAP has been fully costed. Each implementing partner (government ministry and CSOs) will have a separate but linked costing plan for the implementation of their NAP operational Plan. Donor funds for implementation have already been set aside. To help achieve this, UN Women held costing and budgeting workshops, where according to one stakeholder "Costing was discussed and transparent."

M&E FRAMEWORKS

As part of the NAP development process, a subcommittee on monitoring and evaluation was formed, and members who helped develop the Sustainable Development Goal indicators in Uganda were brought in to hold workshops and training. With the support of UN Women, Uganda's third NAP has a complete monitoring and evaluation framework with SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) indicators.

FLEXIBILITY

Even before COVID-19 emerged, UN Women staff reported that Uganda's third NAP was developed to be flexible to respond to emerging issues. Consultations to develop the third NAP identified disease outbreaks (using ebola as an example) and the increased militarization and security risks that accompany these outbreaks as a critical concern for WPS. Broad measures to enhance women's participation in government responses to potential disease outbreaks were therefore incorporated into the new NAP.

6 UN Women's work on national action plans for women, peace and security contributes to laying the foundation for transformational change. However, UN Women would benefit from a clear theory of change in this area.

While UN Women's support to NAPs helped to lay the foundation for transformational change, UN Women did not have a well-developed understanding of how such change comes about, nor did it have a range of standardized intervention strategies to support NAP implementation that could be adapted to local contexts. Therefore, it would be useful for UN Women to elaborate a theory of change that demonstrates how its NAP work can move from lower to higher outcomes reflected in progress towards NAP goals. This understanding would facilitate the development of more effective strategies for achieving gender equality.

The evaluation found that UN Women's support to WPS NAPs advances gender equality by promoting inclusive processes, raising awareness of gender equality, promoting the inclusion of these issues in NAP documents, supporting women's empowerment and leadership, and building partner capacity. However, the evaluation was unable to assess whether these strategies contributed to actual transformative change in the lives of women and girls, because such transformation tends to be a slow and non-linear process driven by local actors.

In all countries, UN Women promoted an inclusive NAP process and sought to engage a wide range of women facing marginalization, including notably conflict-affected women and victims and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. The evaluation found that UN Women's support to the NAP development process in Uganda was a good practice in this regard, as it brought together a wide variety of stakeholders in nine regional consultations. However, in other cases, the evaluation found that UN Women could improve its support for inclusivity and provide more space for additional actors within NAP consultation processes.

UN Women's NAP work included strengthening the capacity of partners to advance gender equality. Its support to civil society to implement parallel accountability mechanisms was very valuable. The evaluation also identified numerous examples of UN Women building the capacity of both civil society and government partners to integrate these issues more effectively into their work.

COUNTRY SNAPSHOT: UGANDA

Stakeholders involved in the NAP development process in Uganda reported that it was one of the most inclusive processes they had ever been a part of. A stakeholder mapping was conducted prior to the regional consultation process to involve as many duty bearers and rights holders as possible. More than 520 actors participated across nine regional consultations. Civil society also played a critical role in the development process by conducting an evaluation of the previous NAPs. This helped to solidify civil society ownership of the process and gain critical buy-in.

7

Given the human and financial resources available for the development and implementation of national action plans, the activities implemented produced satisfactory results.

The evaluation found that in conflict-affected contexts, high personnel turnover limited the ability of field offices to ensure adequate human resources to support effective NAP development, while in other contexts, country offices faced challenges in ensuring adequate personnel to address political complexities and ensure sustainable progress.

While results were satisfactory given the resources invested, these investments were mostly a small fraction of UN Women's overall spending on WPS at the country level. Overall, spending on NAP activities (not including staffing costs) comprised an estimated 6.3 per cent of the WPS budget in the period under evaluation (2015–2019). However, there were some notable exceptions in this regard, with investments on NAPs in Afghanistan, Nepal, Tunisia and Ukraine comprising an estimated 35 per cent of the WPS budget in this period.

The extent to which UN Women's human and financial resources were adequate to support WPS NAPs development and implementation processes was mixed. The

evaluation found that in conflict-affected contexts, high personnel turnover limited the ability of field offices to ensure adequate human resources to support effective NAP development, while in other contexts, country offices faced challenges in ensuring adequate personnel to address political complexities and ensure sustainable progress.

The evaluation noted that additional financial resources could have leveraged additional results, in particular for NAP implementation. However, the evaluation also noted that to better understand how the money spent on NAPs translates into results, UN Women needs to invest in better systems for tracking and reporting results with the right indicators.

EXPERT'S VIEW

Aisling Swaine

Professor of Gender Studies, University College Dublin

Translating the provisions of the WPS agenda into meaningful gendered responses to conflict and peacebuilding has been the focus of advocates since its adoption. National Action Plans on WPS (WPS NAPs) have become a central tool in this regard as a means through which states can make WPS a reality, ideally in both their domestic and foreign policy. Given their importance, the processes of development and resulting quality of plans matters, as does ensuring that the plans themselves are fully implemented.

This is where the UN Women evaluation is so important. It signals a number of critical issues to us: that a driver of WPS like UN Women is needed, so that WPS is translated from global to national through WPS NAPs or other means; that national ownership of these plans is critical; and at the same time, that the right technical expertise and funding must be made available where these are needed, through entities like UN Women and others. A significant take-away from the evaluation is that developing these plans is a complex process, and lead actors on WPS like UN Women must strike a balance between ensuring national leadership on planning, while also providing the right support to catalyse implementation of WPS. A significant recommendation from the evaluation is the need for a 'theory of change' to underpin WPS NAPs. This for me is what has been missing from WPS NAPs development. It pushes the WPS agenda towards its ultimate aims – to make transformative change to gender inequalities in peace and security. As policy makers, practitioners, academics and activists this remains a central concern and I hope to see transformative approaches become central to the next twenty years of the WPS agenda.

Photo ©UN Women/Ryan Brown

8 Internal thematic and organizational coherence in UN Women's support to national action plans on women, peace and security has implications for how the organization reports results and manages knowledge and guidance.

While the majority of support to NAP development and implementation was programmed within the WPS thematic area, in some field presences it was programmed within other areas such as ending violence against women (EVAW) or women's leadership and political participation (WLPP), and therefore reported under these areas. This limited UN Women's ability to have effective oversight of its work on NAPs or to comprehensively understand and assess how this work contributes to wider outcomes within its strategic plan.

The evaluation found thematic coherence of NAP development work within WPS, although there was potential for NAPs to be more effectively utilized as a framework for all of UN Women's WPS work. The evaluation also found that UN Women's NAP work contributed to other areas, including EVAW, WLPP, humanitarian action, gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) and women's economic empowerment (WEE).

Photo ©UN Women/Christopher Herwig

As an example of good practice, the UN Women country office in Uganda adopted an integrated approach to coordination, policy support and programming across thematic areas, in which it explicitly linked each NAP pillar to its other thematic areas to create synergy. This meant that there were shared goals for NAP implementation and shared responsibilities for advancing policy-level changes across UN Women's different thematic areas.

The evaluation found mixed results in terms of UN Women's standardization of learning and knowledge products to inform global normative processes. The evaluation identified demand for better packaged and systematized knowledge to inform country-level actors, in particular best practices and lessons learned on NAPs, guidance on how to address NAP implementation gaps, and lessons on how to assess and capture the impact of NAP implementation and present concrete evidence. Overall, the evaluation assessed that collection, systemization and sharing of best practices in NAP development and implementation within the organization was an area where UN Women could significantly strengthen its systems and practice. Despite this, the evaluation did identify some interesting initiatives for sharing knowledge and good practice, including UN Women support for regional-level learning in the Arab States region.

> *The evaluation assessed that collection, systemization and sharing of best practices in NAP development and implementation within the organization was an area where UN Women could significantly strengthen its systems and practice.*

HOW GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING CONTRIBUTES TO NATIONAL ACTION PLANS ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

AFGHANISTAN: GRB specialists worked with the MoF and MoFA to develop a costed budget for the Afghanistan NAP which was close to being finalized.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA : Gender analysis of the budgets in the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Security was supported and awareness of officials raised. Follow up is being considered to support translation of the recommendations into budget allocations. Through the engagement of a CSO, a local CRSV association was empowered and supported. This was followed up by advocacy actions, resulting in allocations and disbursement for CRSV survivors in one municipal budget.

JORDAN: UN Women partnered with the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) and the Ministry of Finance to support national implementation of GRB as a tool to increase gender equality and support the WPS agenda. Activities included conducting a gender analysis of sectoral programmes; creating gender analysis tools and checklists for state budget institutions; revising the Programme Budget Circular for 2021–2023; and raising awareness and improving skills and knowledge in GRB application for public officials.

LIBERIA: In early 2020, the UN Women Liberia CO launched a project to enhance allocation of financial resources for implementation of the second NAP through innovative financing and GRB. This project will build on lessons learned and will further leverage UN Women's national and global expertise on GRB.

NAMIBIA: GRB expertise was brought in to help with costing the WPS NAP in Namibia.

NORTH MACEDONIA: GRB principles and evidence of their utility was a focus of discussions during the drafting process of the second WPS NAP in North Macedonia.

EVALUATING IMPACT IN GENDER EQUALITY

Guidance note to evaluate impact in gender equality and women's empowerment

UN WOMEN GUIDANCE NOTE
Evaluating Impact in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Download the Guidance Note here

9

UN Women recognizes the importance of national ownership of national action plans for their long-term sustainability, and building this ownership is a central element of its engagement on NAPs.

Advancing national ownership was a central element of UN Women's work on NAPs, primarily through facilitating inclusive processes, promoting strong coordination and building capacity of national actors for sustainable implementation.

Support for inclusive NAP development processes was the most common strategy to promote national ownership. Capacity-building and technical support were also frequently used. For example, in Uganda UN Women focused on strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development to lead the NAP process, while in Nepal UN Women supported the capacity of institutions tasked with NAP implementation at both the central and local level.

A core strategy to build ownership in a number of countries was supporting the development of strong coordination mechanisms among national actors responsible for NAP implementation. For example, UN Women supported the establishment of a cross-sectoral task force for NAP implementation in Iraq. In Georgia, UN Women encouraged shifting the NAP from the legislative to the executive branch, which increased government ownership.

The evaluation found that UN Women largely focused on promoting ownership among a relatively limited group of actors directly involved in NAP processes. In most countries, there was limited emphasis on building broader ownership among wider actors and institutions, such as other government ministries.

The evaluation also noted that UN Women could do more to link NAPs to broader policy and planning processes and emphasize their relevance to wider policy goals. The evaluation observed that where UN Women did successfully support the integration of NAPs into wider policy frameworks or plans they were more likely to be sustainable.

COUNTRY SNAPSHOT: GEORGIA
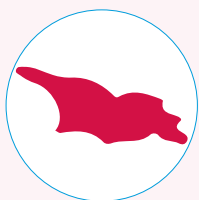
In Georgia, UN Women encouraged shifting the NAP from the legislative to the executive branch, which strengthened government accountability and ownership of the plan. Comprised of more than 30 members from key ministries, the National Coordination Group on United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 is responsible for the implementation of resolution 1325 and holds regular meetings at the Prime Minister's Office where governmental agencies report on NAP implementation progress and discuss successes and challenges. The Gender Equality Council of the Parliament holds an oversight and monitoring function, providing a critical link between the legislative and executive branches.

10

Sustainable implementation of national action plans requires meaningful translation to the local level and ensuring adequate funding.

UN Women needs a clearer strategy for how it can support sustainable implementation. The evaluation found that UN Women engages in NAP implementation across multiple countries, although this engagement was not always systematic and there was no standard approach.

The most consistent component of UN Women's support to implementation was in its support to coordination bodies or other mechanisms responsible for monitoring, regularly reporting and / or evaluating progress on NAPs. In some instances, UN Women field presences also supported the implementation of specific NAP activities, such as harmonization of policy frameworks in the defence and security sectors, provision of embedded personnel within government, support for civil society organizations and women mediators in communities, and activities with direct links to the humanitarian portfolio.

Effective NAP localization was identified as critical for meaningful ownership and sustainable implementation, especially among local actors and for integrating NAP priorities into local plans. UN Women provided support for localization in some contexts, including through development of municipal NAPs, advocacy for integrating NAP priorities into municipal development/workplans, establishment of conflict resolution structures in villages and local communities, and engagement of women mediators and cross-border dialogue activities in conflict-affected areas. However, this support could be more widespread and effective. In some contexts, there have been significant challenges with localization owing to insufficient outreach to local communities and lack of access to provinces in contexts with high conflict and insecurity.

Factors related to funding were the greatest barriers to sustainable NAP implementation. Lack of costing and budgeting and insufficient funding for NAP implementation were cited by multiple categories of stakeholders in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Uganda. GRB was identified as a way to generate some sustainable funding for NAPs, although it was noted that GRB alone is unlikely to raise sufficient revenues. UN Women worked with several countries to incorporate GRB into their NAP work, either during the development stage or when supporting government ministries to budget their NAP for implementation.

LOCALIZATION EFFORTS FOR NATIONAL ACTION PLANS ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY
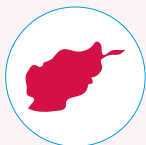
AFGHANISTAN: NAP localization has been a priority in Afghanistan in recent years, as UN Women recognizes the need to ensure that rural women are not left behind. However, due to security constraints, accessing remote areas proved difficult. Given the access issues, civil society stakeholders suggested that UN Women focus on funding and supporting rural civil society organizations so that they can take on localization work.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA:In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UN Women partnered with a civil society organization to develop three local action plans on resolution 1325. After socioeconomic analysis and limited consultations, the plans were developed to include general safety in public spaces, WEE and EVAW. In recent years, new methodologies have been adopted by the Government on local development planning, calling for only one integrated development plan instead of individual sectoral plans, which would imply that NAP priorities ideally become part of integrated local development planning. Neither of the supported municipalities had developed a new action plan after the initial plan had expired. The Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina financed development of a few more local action plans in other municipalities.

GEORGIA: UN Women piloted a project on NAP localization in 10 municipalities along the Administrative Boundary Lines, mainly focusing on capacity-building; fostering involvement and ownership of regional and local administrations; and enhancing the dialogue and participation of internally displaced and conflict-affected women in local decision-making, policy planning and budgeting. Consequently, several priority issues identified by women were effectively addressed. In eight of the ten municipalities, amendments were issued to the local action plans on gender equality, and small budgets were allocated to resolve issues raised during the localization process. However, challenges remained, such as local governments' lack of awareness of WPS and NAP obligations in general; limited funding; lack of a needs-based approach in programming and budgeting; and lack of coordination between central, regional and local governments.
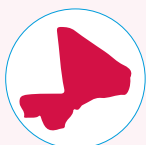
MALI: Three NAP localization exercises were carried out in the Ségou, Sikasso and Mopti regions to build ownership and commitment for WPS objectives among governors, gender focal points, mayors and councilors, security actors, community and religious leaders, male support groups,non-governmental organizations and other key actors. Mali's localization plan included a regional planning workshop with government partners to introduce the NAP, a training workshop with women's civil society organizations to build capacities for NAP dissemination at the local level, and a community workshop with elected municipal officials to align NAP priorities with development plans of municipalities. Other key aspects of the localization plan included capacity-building of peace ambassadors to support NAP implementation, participation in a WPS community of practice, partnering with national non-governmental organizations to strengthen local accountability and scale up activities with women in areas affected by conflict, and the development (in progress) of a training manual on NAP localization/decentralization. NAP localization exercises in the other seven regions will follow.
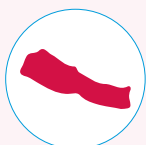
NEPAL: Inclusion of WPS priorities in local budgeting was achieved by the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development through consultations with local bodies to develop a GRB localization strategy. The adoption of this plan was achieved with technical and programming support from UN Women, in partnership with the 1325 Action Group and NAP Implementation Committee.

UGANDA: Including local government (such as Kitgum DLG and Bushenyi DLG) and grassroots women's organizations in the development process for the NAP III was a key strategy for UN Women from the outset. Stakeholders reported that having grassroots-level engagement fed back to the national level and set the stage for implementation and a sustainable process.

11

There is strong potential for national action plan principles and priorities to inform national responses to COVID-19, but so far this has mostly not occurred.

UN Women has supported COVID-19 responses that take account of WPS issues. UN Women supported a gender-sensitive response to COVID-19 and adapted its WPS work to be relevant to this changing context, both by joining the United Nations integrated COVID-19 response and by refocusing its WPS work to directly address the challenges posed by the pandemic.

UN Women has undertaken advocacy work such as social media campaigns, online information sessions and radio broadcasts to raise awareness of the linkages between WPS and COVID-19. UN Women also produced a range of knowledge generation and dissemination activities on gender-sensitive responses to COVID-19. In addition, it provided support to civil society organizations and women peacebuilders, including a funding scheme set up with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs through the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund to fund its COVID-19 responses.

National processes to adopt or implement NAPs were delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic in certain countries.

Stakeholders reported significant concern that funding for WPS objectives would decrease as funds are used to respond to the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19, despite the significant impact of COVID-19 on women in conflict-affected contexts and the recognition by many stakeholders that WPS could be a useful gender-sensitive framework for responding to the pandemic.

Although NAPs are well suited to inform national COVID-19 responses, there was little evidence that they were being used to do so, despite 70 per cent of UN Women field personnel reporting that the NAP supported by their field presence was flexible enough to respond to emerging challenges such as COVID-19.

More broadly, the evaluation found that while key WPS principles and priorities contained in NAPs could be useful in informing national emergency responses – including responses to COVID-19 – they were rarely used in this way. This was in large part because institutions leading emergency responses typically had limited awareness or ownership of the NAP. The majority of stakeholders interviewed recognized the importance of having flexible NAPs that can respond to emerging challenges and crises and that provide a blueprint for actors to coordinate a sustainable gender-responsive emergency action plan. The evaluation recommended that UN Women focus on developing broad, overarching, flexible NAPs within which strategies and activities can be adapted to respond to emerging challenges, although this inevitably makes monitoring the results achieved more difficult.

ADDRESSING COVID-19 THROUGH THE NAP FRAMEWORK

UN Women in **BANGLADESH** was working to address the gendered elements of the COVID-19 crisis through the framework of the country's NAP. Many of its COVID-19 response activities are directly linked to the protection, relief and recovery pillar of the Bangladesh NAP, and therefore simultaneously advance the objectives of the NAP, while responding to COVID-19 related challenges. Specifically, COVID-19 work related to output 1 of the NAP, which addresses the capacity of the security sector, law enforcement and local government to be more gender-responsive during disasters, emergencies and humanitarian crises. It also related to output 3 of the NAP which addresses the knowledge required by government and civil society stakeholders, including first responders in disaster and emergency situations, to protect women's safety and well-being in peace and security settings.

ADAPTING A NAP TO RESPOND TO EMERGING CHALLENGES

In 2014, **IRAQ** became the first country in the Arab States region to launch and publish a NAP in relation to resolution 1325. Less than a year later, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant surged out of eastern Syria to seize key cities and towns in Iraq. In May 2015, with support from UN Women, an Emergency NAP to implement resolution 1325 was passed by the Government. This Emergency NAP focused primarily on including women in all peacebuilding efforts and providing legal, psychological and health support for affected women and girls, responding directly to the context created by the conflict.

Photo ©UN Women/Nicolas Axelrod

MOVING FORWARD

Eight ways to strengthen the support of UN Women to national action plans on women, peace and security

The evaluation identified eight recommendations that are critical for UN Women's future support to the development and implementation of national action plans on women, peace and security (WPS NAPS).

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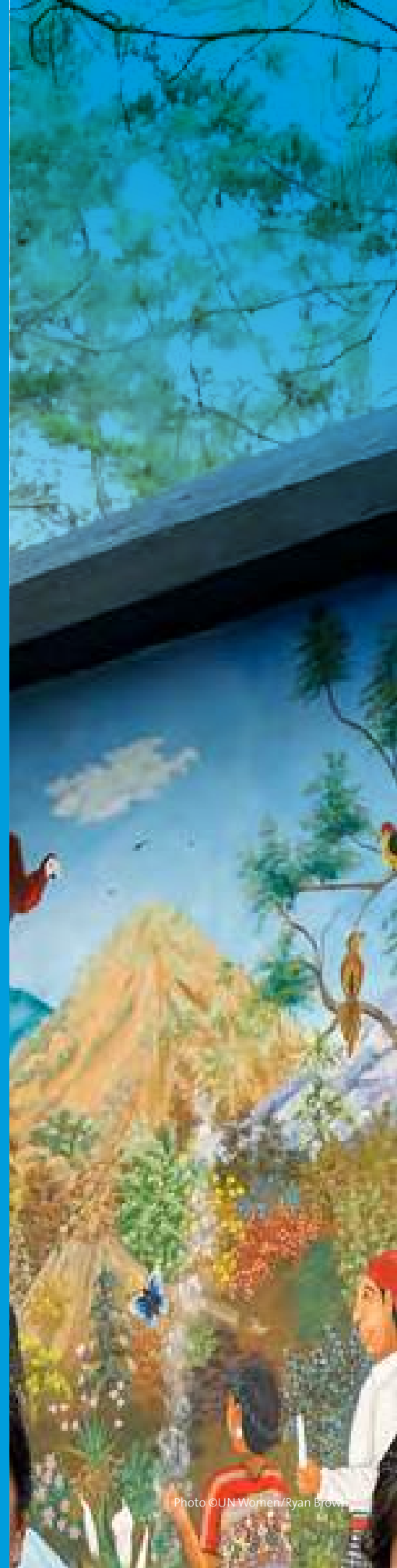
Recommendation 1: UN Women's support to WPS NAPs should connect with and scale up a wider range of global normative frameworks, as well as regional frameworks and processes to increase traction.

UN Women should examine how it can connect its work on WPS with a wide range of normative frameworks and review processes (beyond those strictly related to resolution 1325 or conflict) at the global, regional and national levels. This could provide traction for NAP work, particularly where there are entry points for deeper engagement. This could also provide an opportunity for advancing WPS objectives at the normative level. Developing such a strategic approach to alignment would require strengthening knowledge on wider normative frameworks and their relevance to WPS among UN Women personnel, especially at the country level.

The UN Women Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action (WPSHA) Section and regional offices should map global and regional opportunities for engagement on WPS and NAPs and assess the potential of different global or regional frameworks, structures and processes for advancing regional and national action plans.

Recommendation 2: UN Women should strengthen the synergy between its normative, coordination and operational roles in support of WPS NAPs to enhance its impact.

UN Women should strengthen its understanding of how the different roles and intervention strategies it adopts to support NAPs can connect to and build upon each other. In particular, UN Women should identify, and clearly articulate to personnel what such an integrated approach to WPS NAP work would look like at the country level and how it could be achieved.

The WPSHA section should identify good practices and document examples of an integrated approach to WPS NAP support and develop and disseminate guidance on what an integrated approach looks like and how it can be achieved.

3

Recommendation 3: UN Women should devise a strategy to harmonize its external coordination efforts, with a focus on strengthening and linking global, regional and national-level coordination processes.

UN Women should strengthen its coordination role in relation to knowledge generation and knowledge-sharing, in particular ensuring that evidence, lessons and best practices are shared between multiple levels. The WPSHA Section should identify and share effective approaches to NAPs in different contexts as part of its role as coordinator of global and regional communities of practice. UN Women should channel knowledge and evidence generated from its national-level coordination work to the regional and global levels. Such knowledge-sharing could be funded from mechanisms such as the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund and others.

There is a need to strengthen and expand UN Women's role in United Nations system coordination as well as with other international organizations as it relates to WPS NAPs at all levels. The UN Women WPSHA section and national focal points should engage a wider range of national stakeholders in WPS NAP processes to deepen participation and ownership and use the organization's external coordination with development partners to mobilize funding for NAP implementation. At the global level, the UN Women WPSHA section should strengthen links and synergies with other actors and processes whose work has relevance for WPS and NAPs.

A strategic approach to coordination that builds upon the unique coordination role that UN Women plays on WPS at multiple levels is required. The UN Women WPSHA section should expand global-level networks and spearhead more dialogue at the regional level to strategically feed into global-level recommendations. It should also draw in national-level actors and facilitate multilevel dialogue on NAPs, for example by encouraging participation of national civil society organizations in activities of the Global WPS National Focal Points.

4

Recommendation 4: UN Women should continue to expand its current strategies to support development of WPS NAPs. It should also define a clear and consistent strategy for support to implementation.

UN Women should continue its existing strategies to support inclusive and well-coordinated NAP development processes, in line with high-impact criteria and the use of standardized methodologies. The organization should ensure wide cross-sectoral participation of all relevant actors from government, civil society and other stakeholders, in particular those outside capitals or major cities.

UN Women should decide what role it should play in supporting WPS NAP implementation. It is recommended that UN Women build upon the embedded theory of change outlined in this evaluation, develop a related strategy to inform its support for WPS NAP implementation, and engage in specific support to implementation actions, based on this theory of change and strategy and on an assessment of where the organization best adds value.

5

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Recommendation 5: UN Women should strengthen its understanding of how to support transformational shifts in gender equality and women's empowerment and should use this to inform its work on WPS NAPs.

UN Women should build upon the embedded theory of change outlined in this evaluation to develop a framework for understanding how transformational change in gender equality and women's empowerment happens in conflict-affected settings, and how UN Women can support such change as part of its work on NAPs. The organization should generate more learning from its own interventions regarding which approaches best advance gender equality and the empowerment of women in different types of conflict contexts. It should also develop strategies and tools to assess what types of transformational change are most critical for delivering on WPS objectives at the country level. UN Women should identify partners to implement work in this area, as well as ways to capture the results and impact of such work.

Recommendation 6: WPSHA management should enhance its internal reporting systems related to tracking financial resources and results to better demonstrate and enhance results in relation to work on WPS NAPs. It should also strengthen technical leadership to ensure a harmonized approach to this support.

UN Women should undertake an assessment of the financial resources required to provide meaningful support to WPS NAP implementation. Based on this assessment, the organization could make an informed decision about the strategy it should adopt and the investments to support WPS NAP implementation. WPSHA management, field presences and regional offices should enhance their internal reporting systems to include stronger impact indicators, as well as strengthen organizational understanding of how financial resources are linked to results. They should also develop effective systems to store and manage knowledge and invest in building institutional memory so that knowledge and experience on WPS NAPs are captured, retained and available for future reference. UN Women should consider maintaining a pool of WPS NAP experts with specific terms of reference and technical support from headquarters, from which expertise could be deployed to support NAP development and implementation in a systematic manner.

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Recommendation 7: UN Women should expand the range of actors and processes it engages with on WPS NAPs to broaden and deepen national-level ownership and integrate its engagement on WPS NAPs with its other areas of work at the national level to support sustainable NAP implementation.

Broad national ownership of WPS NAPs across multiple sectors and at multiple levels is critical for sustainable implementation. To achieve this, UN Women should expand the range of actors and processes that it engages with on WPS NAPs. In particular, the organization should reach out beyond the most directly involved actors to engage with those working in other sectors and demonstrate the relevance of WPS NAPs to their work. Similarly, UN Women should strengthen its engagement with local-level actors and processes and should use this as an entry point to support localization efforts.

To support sustainable NAP implementation, UN Women should integrate NAP support with its other areas of work, such as GRB or humanitarian work at the national level, thereby leveraging this wider work in support of NAP implementation in a consistent manner.

UN Women should promote the integration of NAPs into other country-level strategies and plans that it supports (e.g. national gender strategies or development plans). UN Women should also connect its NAP work with its other areas of work at country level, including linking UN Women's GRB programming and NAP work to support the use of GRB to finance NAP implementation, harnessing UN Women's existing work with civil society on norms and attitudes to address the barriers to meaningful NAP implementation, and using UN Women's work on themes such as GBV to help meet NAP goals in these areas.

8

Recommendation 8: UN Women should address the immediate need to integrate WPS principles into COVID-19 responses, as well as the longer-term challenge of ensuring that NAPs are used to inform emergency planning.

UN Women needs to make urgent, strong and consistent efforts to advocate with national, regional and global actors for the consideration of WPS principles in COVID-19 responses. It should also develop longer term strategies to link NAPs to emergency policy and legal frameworks and planning processes at the national level, so that actors working on emergencies understand the relevance of NAPs and that emergency plans and processes integrate key NAP priorities and principles.

EXPERT'S VIEW

Helen Kezie-Nwoha
Executive Director,
Women's International
Peace Centre

As an active participant in the field of women, peace and security (WPS), I have keenly followed the implementation of the WPS agenda at the national, regional and global levels. The 2015 global study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 was the first evaluation, carried out 15 years after the resolution's adoption. Five years later and 20 years into the existence of resolution 1325, the current evaluation of UN Women's support to national action plans (NAPs) on WPS zooms in on UN Women as the lead institution on WPS and one that has led the process of developing NAPs.

This report is particularly useful for civil society actors who have contributed significantly to these processes, held governments accountable and advocated for the implementation of the WPS agenda at various levels. The report indicates strong areas with potential for replication and lessons for practitioners and advocates. It also reveals areas that require more strengthening. This is very helpful to ensure that in the next five years, as partners and peace activists, we know where to pay more attention to guarantee the WPS agenda delivers on its mandate to promote human rights and gender equality for all categories of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings.

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Photo ©UUN Women/Christopher Herwig

REFLECTIONS FROM MANAGEMENT
Learning from this formative evaluation

UN Women's Support to Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans: Opportunities for Transformative Change

By Harriette Williams Bright, Policy Specialist, National and Global Implementation of WPS, UN Women

The corporate evaluation of UN Women's support to national action plans on women, peace and security (WPS NAPs), 2015-2019 comes at a critical juncture, 20 years after the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. It was the first resolution of its kind to recognize that women's full participation in peace processes and the prevention of conflicts and their leadership and agency on protection issues can contribute significantly to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security. The promise of durable peace, however, remains out of reach as widespread violence against women and girls continues and the exclusion of women from decision-making processes on peace and security prevails.

Backed by the United Nations Security Council's consistent calls for Member States to develop, adopt and fund NAPs to advance implementation of the WPS agenda, the adoption of NAPs is an important indicator of Member States' commitment to women, peace and security. As of December 2020, close to 50 per cent of United Nations Member States had adopted such plans. Though many countries have adopted second, third and fourth iterations of their NAPs, at the current pace it will take another 20 years – until 2040 – for all Member States to adopt at least one national action plan on WPS.

UN Women supports Member States at the global, regional, national and local levels in NAP development, coordination and implementation and serves as the leading United Nations agency in this area. The evaluation highlights the significant value of UN Women's coordination and normative role at the global and national level, as it brings together multiple and diverse stakeholders, including civil society organizations, provides neutral spaces for dialogue, and raises awareness and facilitates the development of a shared NAP agenda.

As the evaluation reveals, NAP adoption does not always guarantee transformative impacts in the lives of women and girls due to several factors. To enable tangible results, UN Women will continue to advocate for a whole-of-government approach that includes government actors beyond those traditionally engaged in WPS activities and the integration of key NAP elements into wider policy and planning processes. UN Women will also facilitate increased engagement across United Nations agencies on NAP implementation to promote sustainable peace initiatives in various sectors. Furthermore, UN Women recognizes the value of streamlining NAP processes across the organization's thematic areas of work, harnessing knowledge and ensuring that NAP processes are inclusive and do not leave marginalized groups behind.

As highlighted annually in the United Nations Secretary-General's report on WPS, the evaluation also found insufficient funding to be one of the greatest barriers to sustainable NAP implementation. While noting that Member States have primary responsibility to fund and implement their NAPs, UN Women has worked closely with Member States to address resource gaps through the mobilization of funds, the design of pooled funding mechanisms, the provision of staffing and NAP coordination and reporting support, and direct implementation of NAP actions.

In response to the evaluation's findings for increased UN Women support to NAP implementation, UN Women will assess its added value to NAP implementation in different contexts and build on existing impact-driven NAP criteria to better understand how specific interventions can result in catalytic and transformational shifts in women's rights, gender equality and women's empowerment. Such an assessment is important while recognizing the challenges of evaluating impact due to the political, structural, social and economic complexities of collecting and evaluating data in conflict and crisis contexts.

The evaluation recognizes the need for additional human and financial resources at all levels to fully implement the recommendations. This includes strengthening UN Women's NAP engagement at regional level by harnessing regional plans and mechanisms that foster accountability for NAP implementation. UN Women's NAP localization efforts will also need to address challenges of insufficient outreach to local communities and lack of access to localities in contexts with high conflict and insecurity.

The commitment of UN Women personnel has been key in advancing the WPS agenda at the global and national levels, including leading successful WPS NAP processes at the country level. Building back from the COVID-19 crisis and looking ahead to the next decade, NAP adoption and effective implementation will require intentional actions from all stakeholders and sustained political commitment to fully realize the promise of resolution 1325 (2000).

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Comprehensive methodology for a broad evaluation

The evaluation was conducted from December 2019 to September 2020. It was both summative and formative in nature, summarizing information on existing UN Women strategies and offering recommendations for future work. It adopted a mixed-methods approach and involved four main components of data collection: desk review, including analyses of annual workplans and WPS NAP work for 60 countries, with detailed in-depth reviews of 20 countries plus headquarters units; virtual case studies of Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Guatemala, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Mali, Nepal, Uganda and at headquarters level, including 143 interviews, 3 surveys with UN Women field presences, civil society organizations, government partners and international organizations; and analysis of data from UN Women systems.

The evaluation used both quantitative and qualitative analysis, with an evaluation matrix providing an overarching framework for analysis across all evaluation components. A reconstructed theory of change was developed for UN Women's work on WPS NAPs and was used as the overarching theory to understand how change happens in this area of work. Contribution analysis was used to understand UN Women's performance and assess contributions to observed changes. The evaluation adhered to the United Nations Evaluation Group ethics and standards and applied gender equality and human rights principles.

A reconstructed theory of change was developed for UN Women's work on WPS NAPs and was used as the overarching theory to understand how change happens in this area of work.

Desk review: 60 countries with analysis and summaries of Annual Work Plans and WPS NAP work

In-depth review: 20 countries and HQ

Virtual case studies in 8 countries: Afghanistan, BiH, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Guatemala, Mali, Nepal, Uganda - 113 interviews

Virtual case study in HQ: 30 interviews

3 surveys conducted: survey to Country Offices (56% response rate), to Partner Govts/CSOs (39% response rate), and to International Organizations (22% response rate)

Mixed-methods approach: qualitative & quantitative data collection from different data sources

OneApp Dashboard, DAMs, ATLAS and RMS **systems reviewed**

60 countries reviewed	20 in-depth country review	9 virtual case studies	143 interviews	3 surveys	2 Reference groups

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