

**Looking Back,  
Looking Forward:**



women | peace | security

**Consultations on Canada's  
National Action Plan**

## **Background Note #3 WPS NATIONAL ACTION PLANS: LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES**

In 2014, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) did [an analysis](#) of 27 National Action Plans (NAPS) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. The aim of the study was to provide tangible tools for the development or revision NAPS and to compile lessons learned and best practices. This document summarizes the findings of the study.

Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda has been slow and inconsistent. The OSCE study, as have others, identified two fundamental reasons for the lack of progress in implementation:

- 1) Lack of capacity and commitment of the actors involved
- 2) Scarce resources being earmarked to implement the WPS agenda.

The study outlines best practices and recommendations in several technical aspects of NAPS.

### **The inclusion of an external and internal focus**

Research and lessons learned show that it is important to include both domestic and international elements that reinforce each other in NAPS. For OSCE countries this often involves capacity building. Without a pool of experts at home it is not possible to contribute competently abroad. Maintaining national capacity and competence on WPS and gender mainstreaming domestically will ensure the goals of the NAP can be met.

### **Cooperation with civil society and other partners**

The WPS agenda is a result of strong state and civil society cooperation. This cooperation is essential for the development of NAPS as well. Plans that are created without a broad national consultation process or adopted solely due to external pressure are unlikely to be effective. Establishing clear rules about

how this cooperation should be conducted has the potential to increase satisfaction for all parties.

### **Coordinating mechanisms**

Another important aspect for the development, implementation and review of NAPS is the role and function of a coordination mechanism, such as a coordination body, regular meetings, etc. The role of the overall coordinator is crucial to drive the work forward. As the WPS agenda is broad as well as continuously evolving, there is a need to disseminate and anchor knowledge about the agenda within different sections of the ministries as well as ensure cooperation across different bodies. Several states have pointed out that the role of the coordinator is a challenging one that should be accorded sufficient resources, not just added to someone's existing portfolio.

### **Baseline study**

Before developing a NAP, it is useful to collect information on WPS issues and actions that government bodies and other entities are already taking. This avoids duplicating tasks and creates cross-departmental awareness of information and knowledge. In addition, baseline information should be collected in order to be able to measure progress of implementation, for example on the number of women in the police, armed forces and other entities.

### **Clear lines of responsibility**

Most commonly the responsibility to execute or oversee a certain element of a plan will lie within a government ministry. Information about who performs certain tasks within the ministry should ideally be made available for those who ask for it to allow for a sustained communication flow between different actors.

### **Budget**

Developing, maintaining and implementing a NAP requires numerous activities: meetings need to be coordinated; reports have to be written; training of staff undertaken; survey of women's special needs in

vulnerable situations conducted, and so on. Resources are needed for the completion of these tasks. It is therefore vital that a budget is allocated to actions laid down in the NAP. A lack of resources means that the implementation of the NAP is viewed as an additional task within given human and financial resources, thus seriously constraining implementation.

### Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

Most NAPs are organized around the four WPS pillars: participation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery. However, suggested goals have proven hard to translate into concrete activities as the proposed actions do not fall neatly into one of the four pillars, therefore blurring the lines of what should be done in each pillar. One possible way to lessen the confusion in connection to the pillars is to look at them through a different lens: no conflict, conflict and post-conflict. This structure would still allow for the four pillars to be integrated, but would perhaps enable a clearer tasking and identification of actions needed.

The goal of the monitoring and evaluation and reporting system is to strengthen institutional capacities to monitor progress and efficiency of implementation. The UN General Assembly and the European Union (EU), in an attempt to enhance monitoring and evaluation of NAPs, have developed a list of indicators. Participating States are encouraged to adapt these to their own needs and/or develop their own set of indicators to enable the revision and updating of their NAPs on a regular basis. Reporting on the NAP should be done regularly and made public.

### Goals

NAPs need to be ambitious and include non-measurable targets along with concrete actions tied in with the objectives and goals. They should also include short and long-term goals. Yet, determining goals and actions to meet these goals have been a difficult challenge for many states.

### Putting together a NAP

NAPs should be created by relevant government entities in coordination with civil society partners. Creating a plan provides an opportunity to take stock of actions that are already or should be implemented by various institutions; it improves coherence and avoids duplicating efforts. In the process valuable networks may be established, so the process itself may be as important as the document that is created. A plan should not be seen as a final outcome document but as a living document that is regularly revised and updated. Several factors contribute to the success of NAPs:

1. Work with civil society, stakeholders and other partners
2. Create a coordinating mechanisms
3. Create a baseline study
4. Create a tailored and focused NAP
5. Include indicators and measurable goals, but stay flexible
6. Develop a timeline and prioritize
7. Include budget considerations
8. Outline clear responsibilities
9. Monitor and evaluate progress and challenges
10. Update the action plan after some years
11. Be prepared to meet obstacles

[Inclusive Security](#) has developed criteria for what they call a '[high impact NAP](#)':

**Inclusive Design:** Both government and civil society should be represented in the coordination bodies responsible for designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the NAP. Not all design processes have to look the same, though best practices supports a clear division of roles and responsibilities and a transparent decision-making process.

**Results-Based Design and M&E Plan:** The plan should be designed with results in mind, with a logframe linking outcomes to outputs, and outputs to activities with indicators. The plan should also define roles, responsibilities, and specific timelines for collecting, analyzing, reporting and using the data.

**Political Will:** The NAP should be considered a national issue of peace and security - not just a 'gender' issue. Commitment should be evident at the highest levels of the government, but mid-level management should also be invested in the success of the plan. Where relevant, local and provincial leaders should be engaged as well.

**Resources:** The NAP should be budgeted AND resources allocated, disbursed and tracked. Transparency is key throughout these elements.

Another resource: [Report on a Roundtable - 1325 National Action Plans: Lessons from the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden](#). Ottawa, September 2017.