

Looking Back,  
Looking Forward:



women | peace | security

Consultations on Canada's  
National Action Plan

## Background Note #4 CANADA'S NEW WPS NAP: EMERGING ISSUES

Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (C-NAP) was launched in October 2010. It focused on the traditional WPS pillars of prevention, participation, protection, and relief and recovery. These remain important and crucial issues for attention in the next C-NAP.

Since then, other issues have entered WPS discussions, both globally and in Canada. This note briefly explores some of these to inform discussion for the consultations on the new C-NAP.

### Feminist Foreign Policy and Feminist Approaches to Development Assistance

During last year's International Assistance Review, Minister Bibeau indicated that Global Affairs Canada was interested in hearing from Canadians on how a [feminist lens](#) could inform Canada's international assistance. Many organizations [responded](#) enthusiastically.

Globally, there are ongoing discussions on how [feminist approaches](#) can inform foreign policies and increase momentum for the implementation of the WPS agenda.

Should Canada's NAP explicitly use a feminist lens? Are [Sweden's three R's](#) a relevant framework for Canada: promoting women's rights, supporting women's representation in decision-making and ensure financial resources for promoting gender equality?

### Supporting Women's Organizations and Movements

The critical importance of women's organizations and movements in building peace is clear. Yet [reports](#) note that these organizations receive only a small percentage of international assistance. On the WPS agenda, civil society organizations remain the '[unfunded partner](#).'

The [House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development](#) [recommended](#) that the Government of Canada provide development assistance on a multi-year basis

and for core operations to civil society organizations that are working to implement the WPS agenda.

A particular case is for support (both financial and diplomatic) for women human rights defenders. These activists are constantly at threat and face grave dangers.

### WPS and Extractive Industries

The links among women's rights, gender equality issues, human rights violations, mining and resource extraction, conflict, and building peace are complex. These issues, however, are of key importance for Canada given the role played by Canadian mining companies in Canada and around the world.

Canadian human rights groups are [calling](#) for an extractive sector 'ombudsman' to receive complaints, carry out independent investigations, and make recommendations to companies and to the Canadian government. Are there other links that belong in the C-NAP?

### Climate Change and WPS

There is growing awareness of the gender dimensions of climate change. And there is increasing attention to the linkages between climate change and armed conflict. Yet the connections between the WPS agenda and climate change policies are not always explicit.

Women's human rights defenders around the world are active on environmental and peace issues, highlighting the interconnectedness of these issues.

### Migration and Refugees

The current migration and refugee crises are some of the most serious the world has faced. Canada has responded, admitting 25,000 Syrian refugees. Yet there are still urgent concerns, particularly given the evolution of US policy.

The [gender dimensions](#) of migration and displacement are well-documented. WPSN-C members have urged the incorporation of these

migration and refugee issues into the C-NAP. This is relevant for Canada's approach to humanitarian assistance and refugee policy.

### Small Arms and Light Weapons

Canada has now committed to signing the Arms Trade Treaty. Yet much remains to be done in this area. Given the important gender dimensions of small arms and light weapons, and the importance of progress on ATT in building peace, how can this issue be reflected in the C-NAP?

### Nuclear Disarmament

Many discussions of the WPS agenda are silent on the issue of nuclear weapons. Yet these weapons pose a fundamental threat to peace and security. If Canada is to take the 'prevention of conflict' seriously, what role does nuclear disarmament play in the C-NAP?

The [question is particularly relevant](#) given the current negotiations on a new treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons.

### CEDAW and General Recommendation 30

In 2013, the CEDAW Committee adopted [General Recommendation 30](#), which elaborates on CEDAW (the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) in conflict prevention, conflict, and post-conflict situations.

Last year, the Committee's [concluding observations](#) to the Government of Canada included several recommendations, such as increasing support to local women's organizations and networks active in peace negotiations, expediting the adoption of the second NAP, and increasing resources allocated to the WPS agenda.

### Indigenous Women and the WPS Agenda

Given the multiple dimensions of the discrimination experienced by Indigenous women around the world, they offer [valuable insights and perspectives on building peace](#). How can these be incorporated into the C-NAP and supported during C-NAP implementation?

### Countering Violent Extremism

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2242, adopted in 2015, highlighted linkages between the growing efforts to '[counter violent extremism](#)' (CVE) and the WPS agenda. While the implications of these links are hotly [debated](#), in reality many women's organizations are [being affected](#) by counter terrorism policies and actions.

In Canada, discussions on the gender dimensions of CVE are still relatively new. A key challenge will be to ensure that this is done in a way that is consistent with the original spirit of UNSCR 1325, and that it avoids securitizing women's organizations and initiatives.

### Including Canadian Domestic Issues in the C-NAP

One debate that is ongoing in the Canadian context is whether or not Canadian domestic issues belong in the C-NAP.

Clearly there is a place for issues such as representation of women/equitable participation in Canada's diplomatic, defence and development programmes (at all levels); the capacity of Government staff to implement the WPS agenda; and policies and programmes to address sexual exploitation and abuse by military and police.

Global Affairs Canada has indicated the the C-NAP should be externally facing. However, some civil society organizations have made the case that issues such as missing and murdered Indigenous women are peace and security issues and that these should be included as well.

### Links with Agenda 2030

Significant global investments and attention are currently focusing on Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. While the SDGs include Goal 5, which focuses on Gender Equality, and Goal 16, which promotes just, peaceful and inclusive societies, there is [not a clear emphasis on the WPS agenda](#).

There is an opportunity for the C-NAP to make the [explicit connection](#) between these two foreign policy and development priorities.

### Global WPS Funding Deficit

The [Global Study](#) on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325, published on the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Resolution, noted: "The failure to allocate sufficient resources and funds has been the most serious and persistent obstacle to the implementation of women, peace and security commitments."

The commitment and mobilization of resources to support implementation remains a global gap. Donor countries like Canada are challenged to address this issue when they design new National Action Plans.