



**WPS ACTION  
PLAN  
ADVISORY  
GROUP MEETING  
(FEBURARY  
2023)  
SUMMARY  
REPORT**

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**MARCH 28 2023**

**PREPARED BY  
THE WOMEN, PEACE  
AND SECURITY  
NETWORK-CANADA**

Thank you to all the meeting participants, especially those who chaired discussion groups:

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This report has been reviewed by Government of Canada officials working on CNAP implementation.

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The WPSN-C gratefully acknowledges the financial contribution from Global Affairs Canada that supports our active participation in the CNAP Advisory Group.

## Abbreviations

CAF/DND	Canadian Armed Forces/Department of National Defence
CNAP	Canada's National Action Plan on WPS
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
GBA+	Gender Based Analysis Plus
IRCC	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
NAP	National Action Plan
PSOPS	Peace and Security Operations Program
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
WPSA	Office of the Women, Peace and Security Ambassador
WPSN-C	Women, Peace and Security Network-Canada

## Executive Summary (prepared by Government of Canada officials)

Key themes emerged throughout the panel and small group discussions on the achievements of CNAP 2 and remaining gaps to be considered in the development of CNAP 3. There was broad consensus that the visibility of WPS within government and Canada's role as a leader in WPS has increased over the course of CNAP 2. The creation of the role of Ambassador for WPS has had a positive impact on the implementation of WPS by the government of Canada, and cooperation between civil society and government has been strengthened. Many implementing partners and civil society cite a lack of dedicated resources as a limiting factor and want to see a continued focus on capacity building and the development of customized tools (including but not limited to GBA+ tools) to support CNAP 3 implementation. Dedicated resources are a critical component of accomplishing this. Both government and civil society talked of the desire to see a stronger domestic focus in CNAP 3 with importance given to the inclusion of Indigenous voices and practices. All acknowledged that reporting practices can be improved to tell a more meaningful story of change. Having disaggregated data will be vital to both reporting and designing future approaches. There was also agreement on the need to find more flexible funding mechanisms to ensure grassroots organizations run by women are able to access funding to contribute to broader implementation of the WPS agenda. Overall, there was a feeling that CNAP 2 had increased cooperation between government departments as well as between civil society and government. Many ideas were shared on how, together, we can make CNAP 3 even more effective in guiding the implementation of the WPS agenda in Canada and abroad.

## Background

Canada's Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) (CNAP-2) 2017- 2022 established an 'Action Plan Advisory Group.' According to the second National Action Plan:

*The Group will comprise civil society experts and government officials and will be co-chaired by a Peace & Stabilization Operations Program (PSOPs) official and a representative of civil society through the Women, Peace and Security Network-Canada (WPSN-C). The Group will meet regularly throughout the Action Plan's life cycle to exchange experiences and best practices, discuss challenges and develop innovative solutions related to the implementation of the Action Plan. The Group will also engage with staff from Canadian embassies abroad and women's groups' leaders to learn from experiences from the field. The Group will improve progress monitoring by means of a continuous dialogue between civil society experts and government officials who are responsible for implementing the Action Plan. WPS Champions will attend meetings as defined in the Group's terms of reference.*

The Advisory Group has met at least annually since 2018, with the goal of holding two regular meetings of the WPS Advisory Group each year. However, for various reasons including intensive engagements with stakeholders on the next Action Plan, the delay in the release of the most recent progress report, and the decision to table a 24-month final report, there has not been a regular meeting of the Advisory Group since September 2021.

### Past meetings:

- February 2022: Special **meeting** – Using feminist evaluation methods in WPS contexts
- December 2021: Special **meeting** – emerging themes in the WPS agenda
- September 2021: Regular **meeting** (discussing the 2019-2020 CNAP progress report)
- December 2020: Regular **meeting** (focus on government implementing partners)
- November 2020: Special meeting on **disarmament**
- June 2020: Regular meeting focusing on five themes
- January 2020: WPS and GBA+ (in-person)

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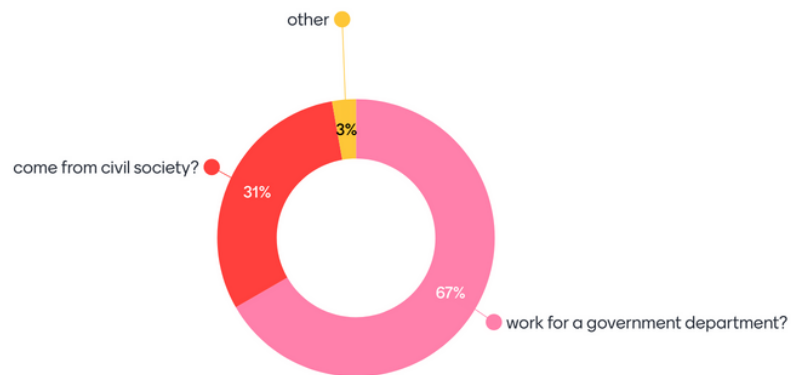
The objective of the regular meeting held on February 22nd, 2023, was to review the **2020-2021 progress report** (released in June 2022) and discuss highlights since then.

The meeting opened with a panel discussion, followed by breakout discussion groups. The panel featured the WPS Ambassador, Jacqui O'Neill, in conversation with three government representatives. Discussion groups were designed to facilitate participants' exploration of achievements and gaps in CNAP implementation over the last several years. The meeting was jointly chaired by the office of the WPSA (Mary Pierre-Wade) and the WPSN-C (Beth Woroniuk). The meeting was held via Zoom, using the Chatham House Rule, so the contents could be shared without attribution to specific speakers.

Participants included (see Figure 1 for the poll results on the percentage breakdown) :

- WPS focal points from across CNAP implementing departments, and other interested staff
- Office of the Ambassador for WPS
- WPSN-C members (and other interested civil society representatives).

## Do you...



(Figure 1: Responses by participants via Menti.com)

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\* Supporting and protecting women peacebuilders; Programming and other forms of support for the WPS Agenda during COVID-19; Implementation of the UN Secretary General's Appeal for a global ceasefire; Peace and security in Canada: What does implementation of the WPS agenda look like at home?; Action Plan reporting and mid-term review: Strengths and areas for improvement.

## Opening panel on CNAP implementation: progress and challenges

Moderator: Jacqueline O’Neill, Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security

### *Panelists*

- Global Affairs Canada – Director General
- Canadian Armed Forces/Department of National Defence – Special Advisor
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada – Senior Policy Analyst

The first question the panel addressed was: looking back on the last approximately two years, what are some examples of how having a CNAP influenced the ways that your department works, not necessarily what was tracked in the plan or outputs, but in terms of processes, awareness, and so on.

The Global Affairs Canada representative noted that Global Affairs Canada is taking a leadership role in implementing the WPS agenda.

They explained that GAC has a great advantage by virtue of having a global platform of embassies around the world, ambassadors and officers who have joined the cause. They are using the CNAP as their lodestar, innovating, perhaps more than at headquarters, in collaboration with local peacebuilders, local groups of friends of WPS, and others.

Innovative ideas are coming out of the field and building Canada’s brand as a leader in WPS. There is analysis that addresses the challenges of reconciling the theory of WPS with the practical realities on the ground.

Challenges include time constraints. For example, all the requests for the Ambassador’s participation cannot be satisfied. We need to recruit new champions, not only in Canada but also internationally.

The CAF has increased representation of women, as well as engagement with GBA+. National Defence is the department where the WPS agenda has had as much effect internally as it has externally.

One change in expectations is demonstrated by the preparation of CAF members deployed to Poland after the Russian invasion of Ukraine to assist with refugee issues. They arrived with a very good understanding of what they needed to consider – the vulnerability of women & girls, issues of human trafficking, etc.

As well, Canada has supported the Women, Peace & Security Chiefs of Defence Network in providing learning materials.

Internally, WPS issues are part of education programs.

The Mobilizing Insights in Defence and Security (MINDS) program provides funding. There are two academic networks currently receiving funding (RN-WPS and Transforming Military Cultures).

IRCC outlined that there is overlap in equity areas in the department. They consider this an inherent element in work with refugees, as they look at various vulnerabilities, including those related to gender.

Section 94 of the Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act requires GBA+ reporting to Parliament on an annual basis. They are working on better data collection and analysis on disaggregated data. As well they now have an anti-racism task force.

One challenge is how to identify how CNAP is contributing to specific elements of their work, as they see it as a cohesive whole. CNAP focal points are asked to address issues related to women and girls, as well as members of LGBTQIA+ communities. This includes questions like, are we being equitable? Are the numbers of women, men, and gender



diverse people accessing certain programs equitable? Are there gaps? It is pushing them to get to know their clients better, to assess needs, and to make sure they are reaching everyone and providing all the services that are needed.

CNAP, both regular reporting and the development of the new plan, is providing them with the necessary evidence base to inform policies.

IRCC noted that CNAP reporting strengthens the equity team's knowledge of what is going on, since they need to reach out to so many teams. It builds relationships and helps to develop a feminist intersectional analysis. Hopefully, resulting in real impact.

Panelists described challenges they have faced over the last two years.

- **Data:** Departments lack comprehensive, disaggregated data and analysis on sexual orientation, race, gender, etc. They have data broken down by male/female, but not beyond that. This provides challenges when discussing, for example, queering the WPS agenda. There are issues with regards to privacy and ethics with collecting such data and the government has not always had a good track record on this sort of thing. Finally, it is challenging to ensure consistency from year to year. It is harder to assess progress, for them and others looking at the data and wanting to encourage action, when information is not consistent.
- **Staff turnover:** Even though there is progress in providing handover notes and improved ways of working, it is not always clear to a new person what is being done and why.
- **Differentiating GBA+ report and WPS reporting:** Staff look to identify what is different, so they are not just repeating GBA+ reporting in CNAP reporting.
- **Indicators:** It can be a challenge identifying the implication of specific indicators -- if 10 people were trained, for example.
- **Addressing the treatment of women in DND/CAF:** This is not a new issue, but there has been increased visibility, both positive and negative. There has been a strong departmental response and the institution of the role of Chief Professional Conduct and Culture, an Indication of the seriousness with which senior leadership There is a growing understanding that this is the way forward, with a trauma-informed approach.

- Understanding the challenges faced by women deployed internationally (UN, NATO): In the enthusiasm to increase the number of women deployed, at times they have put them in harm. Some headquarters structures aren't as welcoming and they have not always provided them with the appropriate support in hostile workplaces, dealing with marginalization, etc. This is especially the case when women are deployed as the only Canadian in a location. This is a challenge they have recognized and more work needs to be done.
- Capacity: It can be a challenge to consistently address gender equality considerations.
- Identifying new partners: There is a tendency to work with the 'usual suspects,' those who speak English or French, who come across as well prepared, but who are not necessarily those with the best networks, etc. That perspective is brought back to Canada as well. For example, through the Canada Fund, there is a built in bias against a lot of organizations that just don't have the capacity. There needs to be more sensitivity in how they pick their implementers.
- More focus on prevention and responses in conflict. For example, in Ukraine, they had not previously built sufficient capacity to persecute SBGV crimes before the invasion and now need to help in retroactively addressing this.

Panelists were asked what one thing they would want CSOs and sister agencies to know about how their department engages with WPS.

The Canadian Armed Forces continue to work on the full implementation of GBA+, including through their network of gender advisors, both institutionally and in operations. They are working towards shifting understanding of GBA+ from filling out the forms to one about leadership, responsibility and decision making. Conveying this shift will have significant impacts across the institution.

IRCC has found it challenging to understand their target pertaining to CNAP and they have re-focused on identifying the target population of this agenda. As WPS has moved to domestic implementation, they are considering how to distinguish WPS from gender writ large to avoid WPS/CNAP reporting including everything gender-related that they do.

GAC is focusing on the extent to which WPS is being delivered overseas, by people who are not part of the core WPS team. WPS may not be part of their regular work per se, but they are experimenting and learning a lot along the way.

Thanks were extended to the panel for their frank comments and their work on the upcoming CNAP3.

## Breakout Groups

The breakout groups were an opportunity for an informal exchange of progress and challenges as outlined in the progress report, as well as significant developments since June 2022. These notes provide highlights of the discussions, rather than an exhaustive report.

The suggested questions for discussion were:

- What do you see as the most important achievements in CNAP implementation in the last 2-3 years?
- Are there gaps in implementation?
- What questions do you still have about CNAP implementation?

## *Group 1*

- Achievements in recent CNAP implementation:
  - A government representative said institutionalizing how to use GBA+ to advance the WPS agenda is both a challenge and achievement. GBA+ is a tool to change the way of thinking.
  - A civil society representative said that the agenda is being taken seriously and there are conversations between different government bodies which were missing in the first CNAP.
  - A civil society representative pointed out the visibility of the CNAP across departments, the use of appropriate terminology, and the expansion to include more departments.

- A civil society representative suggested that CNAP2 was ambitious in many respects, although there is much to build on and change and improve, the ambitious nature of CNAP2 was carried through in many respects (for example, the establishment of the WPSA, the Advisory Group meetings ). These are practical outputs.
- Another civil society representative talked about how WPS visibility and the normalization of gender language across government is an achievement, as well as the leadership role Canada has taken in multilateral spaces. Hopefully this will continue.
- Gaps in implementation:
  - A civil society representative raised the issue of the domestic lens, which has been talked about for a while. There is a lot of potential for further development, but it has been underutilized, not from lack of interest necessary, but there is more to do.
  - A member of civil society asked how data can be collected in a way that translates into a communications piece that can be understood. As well, how can we get qualitative data into the reporting?
  - A government representative talked about their wish not to duplicate reporting done elsewhere, how it is not strategic to put too much under the CNAP, but it is part of a package of what needs to happen in parallel with other action plans, commitments, etc.
  - A civil society representative mentioned policy coherence. It is not clear how the Canadian government understands and differentiates between different gender frameworks (eg CNAP, GBA+, FFP). In order to maintain credibility and sustain Canada's leading role, policy coherence is necessary. A government representative agreed that coherence matters a lot, especially as the domestic focus increases.
  - A government representative said that many people working on WPS do not have it as the main part of their job. They need to pull aspects from all these projects about how they are pushing forward the WPS agenda; how to tell that story and communicate all the work they're doing.
  - A civil society representative asked how do we publicly engage and get this information out that honours people and process and respects their dignity.

- Remaining questions about CNAP implementation:
  - A civil society representative mentioned a webinar last year with Colombian HRDs and the peace process and their lessons learned. Is it possible we are missing other perspectives (non-Canadian, non-western lens)? Perspectives that might feel quite alien, out of our realm, but could assist in pushing the WPS agenda forward?
  - A government representative said that, while they have international engagement, diplomacy, etc in their implementation plans, they need to ensure knowledge exchange happens, lessons learned are shared, etc with other countries, particularly outside of NATO and other western countries.
  - A civil society representative reiterated the comment from the plenary about being aware of our biases and speaking to those people who ‘speak better’ and get the attention
  - As well, how do we actually capture results? It is hard to package progress and show it in a way that comes across well in a report and really shows how much work is being done

## *Group 2*

- Achievements in recent CNAP implementation:
  - A civil society representative said that, in the big picture, the appointment of an ambassador on WPS has been really key on a number of different levels; partly because it is the mandate-holder herself, but also the role itself. A government representative followed up on this and said that the Ambassador for WPS’ role is not a checkbox exercise and having this kind of a champion within our structures is a useful tool and has become integral.
  - A government representative mentioned training on GBA+ as a step forward, but noted that there is still a need for more depth on how to apply and evaluate it, to develop the understanding of why it is relevant in a particular sector. A civil society representative mentioned that, shortly before the pandemic, there was an Advisory Group meeting on GBA+ that was very popular. With the staff turnover on the government side, there is a need for ongoing training.

- A government representative mentioned the application of an Indigenous lens and the Ambassador for WPS' engagement with Indigenous groups. WPS is not just international, but domestic in a colonial state. In CNAP2, it says that Canada is not a state that has experienced conflict.
- A government representative mentioned the commitment on tracking spending specifically related to WPS and that this is not the case with many other governments.
- Gaps in implementation:
  - A civil society representative said they would like to see validation of the gender equality coding (that tracks GAC WPS spending), to ensure there is agreement on what the codes mean, etc.
  - A government representative said that so many aspects of gender disaggregated data are really helpful and stronger data would only be beneficial.
  - A member of civil society raised the issue of the delay in producing the progress reports and asked how the reports are being used internally. There is a chase after data to include, but not necessarily a discussion of what was done well, etc.
  - A government representative raised the issue of how a policy or program impacts people is for the people themselves to decide. The federal government has a constitutional right to protect Indigenous rights under UNDRIP and, with regards to CNAP3, the government is legally obligated to consult with Indigenous peoples (on CNAP3 in particular). If something is applied across the country, broadly and implicates Indigenous peoples, etc, there needs to be consultation with Indigenous peoples; these conversations, this lens needs to be included.
- Remaining questions about CNAP implementation:
  - A civil society representative pointed out that no one has enough time or resources.
  - A government representative said that what we have is something we can build on; there are people who are prepared to take these things forward on the programming side.
  - A civil society representative asked how, at the mission level, staff are instructed or guided to take the CNAP on board and how that fits in with other priorities, such as Voices At Risk (the guidelines to support Human Rights Defenders).

### *Group 3*

- Speakers from the government drew attention to the enthusiasm and participation amongst federal government departments who are engaged in the implementation of the CNAP, demonstrating that gender equality mainstreaming is occurring across areas of work and is front and centre in federal government planning and policymaking.
- A speaker from civil society highlighted the difficulties in accessing flexible government funding for WPS initiatives that can be used across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, which is critical for funding to be useful in complex situations as they evolve.
- Speakers from both government and civil society emphasized that staff turnover on the government side can lead to implementation gaps and make it difficult to participate fully in conversations like these as background knowledge is critical.
- Another implementation gap flagged by both government and civil society speakers was the issue of capacity, which must be improved in order to provide more tools and resources to support the integration of gender perspectives on all peace and security initiatives across departments and sectors and to level the playing field.
- Members of civil society asked about practical solutions to help women in urgent need, especially in the context of aiding and supporting Afghan refugees and women peacebuilders in Ukraine.

### *Group 4*

- Achievements in recent CNAP implementation:
  - One civil society member remarked that CNAP's focus on language and emphasis on inclusion (e.g. using words such as "everyone"), has made the WPS agenda more accessible to 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members.
  - A government representative stated that the implementation of the GBA+ framework has strengthened since CNAP2; it has shifted thinking processes internally and significantly improved the facilitation of operations.
  - One civil society member shared that CNAP implementation has strengthened collaboration between civil society groups and government representatives.

- Implementation gaps:
  - One civil society member shared that we should stop depending on “operational effectiveness” as a mechanism for buy-in; we need to focus on gender equality as the main purpose for women’s engagement in the WPS agenda.
  - A government representative emphasized the importance of less cumbersome reporting; we should instead focus on telling the full story (e.g. what tangible improvements have resulted from the CNAP?).
  - When asked about the balance of engagement between government and civil society, one civil society member highlighted that tight government deadlines make it difficult for civil society members to fully engage and participate. Another civil society member recognized that although the intent to balance the space is present, there are gaps, such as lack of clarity on what is actually being reported on, that make it difficult for the full involvement of civil society members.
  - A civil society representative emphasized the importance of transparency and accountability; while recognizing that the WPSA has made strong efforts in this area, this remains a problem in other departments. For instance, it is important for civil society to understand the ways GBA+ is applied to proposals; more generally, civil society members would appreciate examples of how the WPS framework is constantly incorporated into government work.
  - A government representative recognized gaps in GBA+ training for officers and differences in the extent of application; there needs to be more focus on targeted training in the implementation plans of CNAP3.
  - One civil society member remarked that CSOs can be a good resource when interacting with vulnerable communities such as WHRDs and would like to see the inclusion and participation of civil society members in working to bridge this gap.
  - One civil society member reaffirmed the importance of including Indigenous voices in domestic conversations.
  - A government representative highlighted the necessity of funding flexibility in humanitarian efforts.



- Remaining questions about CNAP implementation:
  - A government representative asked about the presence of men in the WPS agenda and, more importantly, how the new CNAP will aim to address patriarchal resistance?
  - A government representative also raised the issue of how to address the gap between the expectations the government raises and the reality that oftentimes results (e.g. Afghan women and girls not having access to education).
  - A civil society member asked if there are pockets of WPS resistance at CAF/DND. Could the department's focus on militarization lead to WPS taking a back seat?
  - A civil society member questioned how Canada can actively support crisis situations like Haiti; how will Canada show leadership through crisis response mechanisms?

### *Group 5*

- Achievements in recent CNAP implementation:
  - A member of civil society highlighted the increased awareness in Canada pertaining to the objectives of the CNAP, and how it has broader discussions on human rights pertaining to women, the LGBTQI+ community, racialized individuals, and other intersectional identities.
  - Another member of civil society mentioned they were pleased to see coordination among government departments on the CNAP mandate. They also highlighted that they wish to see the positive relationship between civil society and GAC on the WPS agenda, reproduced with other government departments as well.
  - A government official expressed that departmental collaboration on the WPS agenda has brought individuals together with expertise, which has enabled efforts to be aligned. This collaborative process has supported the departments to identify gaps, and ensure no duplication efforts. They also shared that there has been an increased focus on the domestic implementation of the CNAP, which strengthens implementation abroad. Lastly, within the department, there have been evolving conversations, beyond just women and girls, and an emphasis to include other vulnerable groups in the CNAP, in an effort to approach this through an intersectional lens.

- Gaps in implementation:
  - A member of civil society expressed the importance of bridging the domestic and international gap on the topic of gender and violence. It is also important to approach the CNAP through a feminist lens to include intersectional identities.
  - Another member of civil society further emphasized the importance of the Government of Canada's engagement with the CNAP on the global stage. They highlighted that the CNAP should document challenges to implementation, how they were addressed and/or how they plan to address those challenges.
  - A government official expressed that the CNAP should capture the impact it has based on its implementation. They recognized the need for strategies to support women in leadership positions, in addition to including representation from Indigenous communities.
- Remaining questions about CNAP implementation:
  - Members of civil society stated that there should be references in the CNAP to understand how it is achieving high-level objectives and a need to balance quantitative with qualitative reporting.
- Other common themes in participant responses included:
  - Emphasis on bringing more voices to the CNAP initiative.
  - The need for collaboration between the Canadian government and civil society.
  - The inclusion of men allies who can move the agenda forward.

### *Group 6*

- Achievements in recent CNAP implementation:
  - The ability to normalize conversations regarding gender equity and inclusivity. There is often hesitation for discussing these topics due to a lack of information, the formal recognition of the need to initiate these conversations is helpful.
  - The increased access to data as a result of CNAP is appreciated, as it allows for the recognition of where there are gaps in data and areas in need of improvement.
  - Allows for protection against rollbacks as it creates a base level of expectations.
  - It increases awareness and the obligation to act.

- Gaps in implementation:
  - Areas for improvement were highlighted regarding further conversations with allied countries and partners to better understand how they view WPS and what their NAPs look like.
  - Domestic versus international objectives: the 5 objectives are internationally focused, and this has been noted by multiple departments.
  - There is a lack of application of WPS lens on IRCC policies for women and girls being resettled in Canada. Specific references were made to Ukraine, Turkey, Syria, Haiti and human rights defenders from Afghanistan. The barriers to resettlement through IRCC policies in this regard need to be addressed. Canada has failed to respond adequately in these instances and the WPS agenda needs to be effectively implemented in crisis situations. There is a need for a gender and vulnerability assessment throughout the migration process.
  - The lack of budget allocated for the evaluation of the last NAP is problematic.
- Remaining questions about CNAP implementation:
  - Departments could benefit from guidance on how to identify shortcomings and failures as it will allow them to learn and improve upon these deficiencies for further implementation.
  - Departments need further information on the flexibility of the implementation plan as priorities shift, and to what extent they can adapt their implementation plan when necessary.

## Conclusion

After the breakout group discussions, participants were invited to share brief, specific observations from the breakout groups.

A range of issues were noted, including the importance of the domestic agenda, and in particular bringing an Indigenous lens to these discussions; the value of flexible funding for women's organizations in humanitarian and development settings; the benefits of collaboration, both between government entities and between government and CSOs; the need for participation in WPS spaces by male allies; and Canada's obligations to WHRDs.

The organizers of the meeting closed the meeting with gratitude for all those participating. They thanked the panelists and speakers, as well as those who led small group discussions and the organizers. They also noted appreciation for all the participants who entered into these discussions with a shared commitment to learn and advance these discussions. Finally, thanks were extended to all the note takers, as their contributions made this report possible.

## What word or phrase best describes your highlight from CNAP implementation from the last few years?



(Figure 2: Responses by participants via Menti.com)