

FROM GLOBAL PROMISE TO NATIONAL ACTION

*Advancing Women, Peace, and Security
in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Philippines,
Serbia, and Sierra Leone*



Alexandra Amling & Marie O'Reilly

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OEF Research is a program of the One Earth Future Foundation.

www.oneearthfuture.org

<http://dx.doi.org/10.18289/OEF.2016.010>

Cover Images, clockwise from top left: *Global Conversation on a post-2015 SDG Agenda in the DRC, photo by UNDP, Flickr. Professor Miriam Colonel Ferrer signs peace treaty between Philippine Government and MILF, photo by Presidential Photo Division via Getty Images. Billboard in Belgrade, photo by Alexandra Amling. Women gather at the YWCA in Freetown, photo by Alexandra Amling.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The authors extend special thanks to Conor Seyle and Miki Jacević for their support and guidance throughout this project. We are particularly grateful to Anne-Marie Goetz for her thorough review of the report and constructive suggestions. We would also like to thank Marija Babović, Maja Bjeloš, Cecilia Dalupan, Odette Disu Mawete, Annie Matundu-Mbambi, Rosaline MCarthy, Scheherazaide Pahn, Timo Mueller, Sonja Stojanović Gajić, Irene Santiago, and Tracie Ware for their extensive assistance during field trips in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Philippines, Serbia, and Sierra Leone. Finally, we are grateful to the interviewees who took the time to share their insights and experiences with us, without whom this report would not have been possible.

This study and report was supported by the One Earth Future Foundation and Inclusive Security.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2010, conflict and displacement around the globe have increased. Unlike traditional conflicts typified by inter-state military confrontations, today's hybrid wars increasingly threaten civilians, and state-centric approaches to peacemaking frequently fall short. As new evidence links women's participation in a variety of peace and security processes with greater likelihood of successful outcomes, international frameworks for more inclusive approaches to building peace have advanced significantly. Less understood, however, is the role of more recent national initiatives in making these global aspirations a reality.

The number of countries creating national strategies to advance women's participation in peace and security processes has tripled from 18 to more than 60 since 2010. National action plans for implementing United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security were conceived to address the gap between prescriptive international frameworks and domestic realities. Nationally designed and owned, they reflect each country's particular security needs and priorities for peace. But how are they developed in practice, and what impact do they have?

This report explores these questions in four diverse conflict-affected and post-conflict contexts, with a particular focus on the ways in which these plans influence collaboration between the state and civil society.

The Democratic Republic of Congo, the Philippines, Serbia, and Sierra Leone all created national action plans (NAPs) in 2010 for implementing Resolution 1325. They took distinct approaches in many ways, often related to their varied peace and security challenges, levels of gender equality, and geographic and socioeconomic status. Nonetheless, the commonalities that emerged across these cases, as well as particular insights from each, offer valuable lessons for those seeking to create or strengthen NAPs in various contexts around the world.

In each country, the national action plan filled a gap in domestic policy relating to women, peace, and security, and raised awareness of these issues among a variety of actors who design, influence, or implement peace and security policies. In fact, the creation of each plan involved a broadly inclusive process that drew input from a variety of government ministries, security sector actors, and civil society organizations. Interviewees consistently reported that this process increased collaboration and communication between civil society and the state on issues relating to peace and security, and women's involvement in them.

Indeed, this otherwise uncommon participatory policymaking has become standard practice for creating NAPs around the world. It brings to life the spirit of inclusion set forth in

Resolution 1325 and is particularly significant in the aftermath of conflict, when there is a need to build trust between citizens and the state and to increase communication around peace and security issues. In particular, the involvement of civil society organizations as intermediaries between citizens and political elites allows for increased participation by women, who often face greater barriers to entry in other intermediary structures such as political parties.

Despite these achievements during the development phase, there were significant obstacles to implementation of the NAPs in each case. Structural gender discrimination consistently prevented states from meeting the objectives of their plans. NAPs were not flexible enough to adapt to new peace and security challenges that emerged, such as Ebola in Sierra Leone or election-related violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Those implementing the NAPs also frequently failed to get beyond the national level to address provincial and municipal priorities, or draw on local-level change-makers. In fact, in the implementation phase, all of the countries struggled with the key components associated with "high-impact" NAPs: political will, coordination, financial support, and monitoring and evaluation of the results.

These obstacles are significant but not insurmountable. As countries revise and renew their NAPs, and new countries seek to create them, this report offers a number of avenues for advancing progress and deepening impact:

- 1. Address structural barriers to women's participation in peace and security processes**
- 2. Create flexible plans that can adapt to new security threats**
- 3. Localize plans to address diverse priorities for peace**
- 4. Establish accurate cost estimates, and identify and allocate sufficient funding in the NAP's development phase**
- 5. Strengthen political will and coordination for implementation**
- 6. Monitor, evaluate, and communicate results**

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INTRODUCTION

Marie O'Reilly

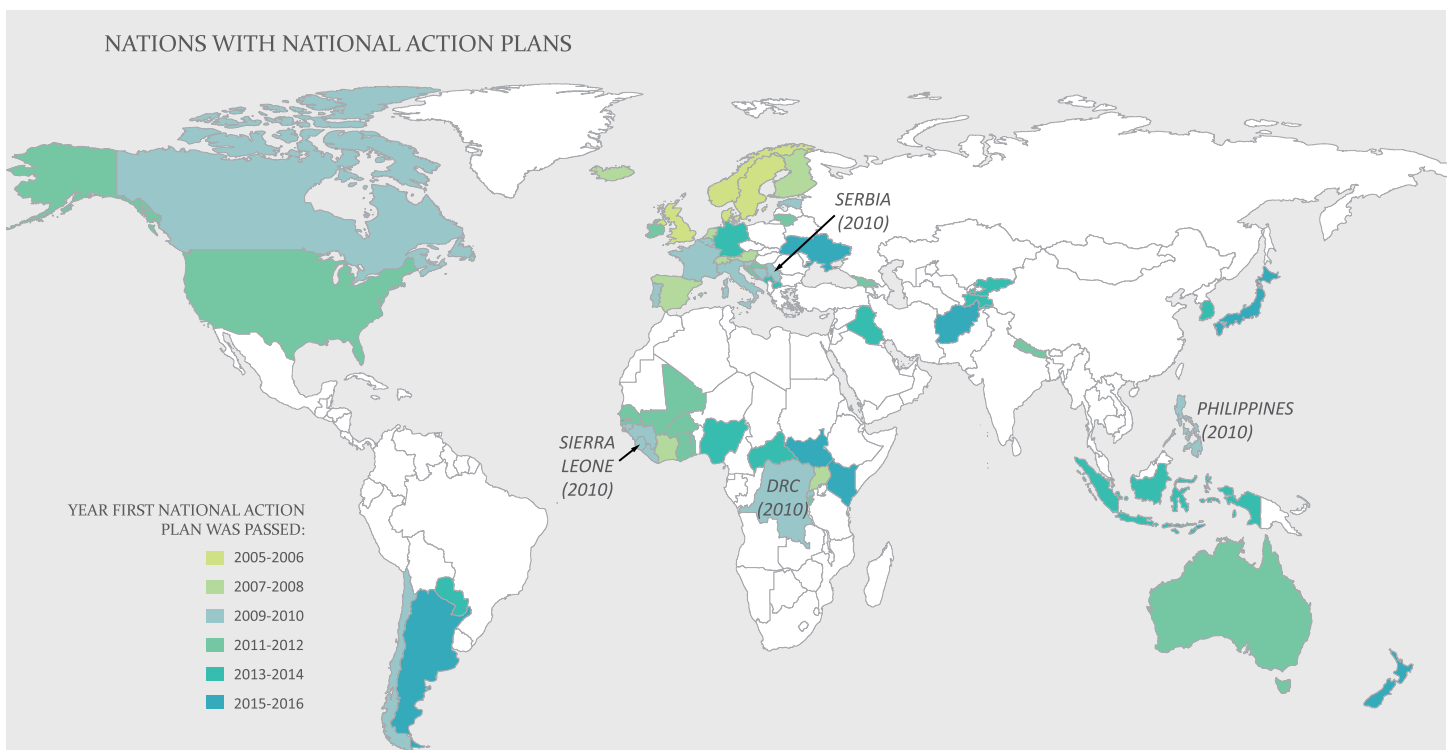
The number of countries adopting national strategies on women, peace, and security has more than tripled since 2010. As conflicts around the world increased over the same period and produced record levels of displacement, many nation-states are realizing that different approaches to peace and security are needed.¹ Research has shown that when women are included in peace processes, an agreement is more likely to be reached and peace is more likely to endure.² When women participate in decision-making on national security and peacebuilding policies, their states are more likely to remain peaceful.³ So, how can nations best advance women's inclusion?

International frameworks for engaging women in peace and security processes have progressed significantly since the UN Security Council passed its landmark Resolution 1325 in October 2000. There are now eight Security Council resolutions on “women and peace and security,” and a plethora of guidelines for how to mainstream gender considerations in the UN's peace and security activities. However, the Security Council resolutions in this area are widely considered to be “soft law” rather than “hard law,” carrying a lesser degree of legal obligation.⁴ As such, it is perhaps unsurprising that funding levels and political support for advancing women's roles in peace talks and post-conflict planning continue to fall short. This “accountability gap” means that actual developments in conflict-affected countries have not kept pace with the aspirations articulated in international fora.

Widespread exclusion persists in formal peace and security processes: women made up just 9% of negotiators and 2% of mediators in high-level peace talks between 1992 and 2011.⁵

New momentum has developed around *national* initiatives for making Resolution 1325 a reality. National action plans for implementing Resolution 1325 have been devised to address the gap between prescriptive international frameworks and domestic realities. National action plans serve as official government planning tools, allowing institutions to outline specific actions and strategies for achieving goals—in this case, goals in relation to women and peace and security. Since 2002, the UN Security Council and Secretary-General have made repeated calls for UN member states to advance implementation of Resolution 1325 through these national-level strategies.⁶ In 2007, the UN Secretary-General emphasized that “governments have the primary responsibility for implementing the resolution.”⁷ Though the uptake was initially slow, as of mid-2016, 63 out of 193 member states had adopted national action plans, or NAPs, for implementing Resolution 1325; 71% of these did so in or after 2010.⁸ States are increasingly recognizing that formulating their own policies in this realm offers a significant opportunity to advance peace and security in their societies.

While they are one of many tools needed to realize the aspirations of Resolution 1325, NAPs are nationally designed and owned, so they reflect each country's particular security needs and priorities for peace more closely than international frameworks can. The creation of these plans typically brings together state actors in government, the diplomatic arena, and the security sector to develop tailored strategies to



accelerate change in their respective domains. Unlike many other policy-creation processes in the field of peace and security, it is also standard practice for women and men in civil society to participate in the development of NAPs relating to Resolution 1325—in particular, though not exclusively, individuals and organizations working at the nexus of women, peace, and security. This participatory approach has been tried and tested in the fields of development and health—for example, in the creation of poverty reduction strategies and in tackling HIV/AIDS. But these domains are typically considered less politically sensitive than the realm of peace and security, which historically has had less transparency.

This practice of participatory policymaking brings to life the spirit of inclusion set forth in Resolution 1325. It gives greater say to those affected by peace and security policies, and in particular incorporates more women’s voices than their under-representation in state structures would usually permit. It further allows for input from experts and practitioners who are often deeply familiar with the gendered nature of peace and security challenges in their societies and communities, and who can propose opportunities for advancing peace that other state-led strategies may have overlooked. This is particularly relevant in light of the changing nature of conflict in the last two decades. As inter-state wars defined by conventional military confrontations have declined and belligerents increasingly target civilians, traditional state-centric solutions—typically defined by more limited citizen participation—have also fallen short.⁹

Participatory approaches to policymaking have additional benefits in conflict-affected environments. Although collaborative policymaking can be complicated and time-consuming, the creation of participatory procedures presents a strategic opportunity to manage social conflict and deepen democracy’s roots.¹⁰ It builds “social capital”—mutual confidence between government and civil society—that mitigates conflict and contributes to effective governance.¹¹ In contexts where a lack of communication and trust around security issues can bear a very high cost, collaboration around NAPs in particular increases flows of information concerning peace and security priorities and creates new avenues for communication between government bodies, the security sector, and civil society. In addition to this vertical collaboration, NAPs offer opportunities for horizontal collaboration across religious, social, and ethnic lines to shape and implement a common national plan for inclusive peace. This in turn can increase political cohesion and stability in an otherwise fragmented public sphere, bolstering chances for sustaining peace.¹²

Despite these benefits associated with NAPs, few countries have been able to articulate the specific impacts made by their own NAPs. Scant data is available on the effectiveness of such plans and strategies as monitoring and evaluation have frequently fallen short. In addition, as a relatively new

development in the field of peace and security, NAPs remain under-researched. Those who *have* been tracking the progress of NAPs more closely have raised legitimate concerns. Academics have questioned whether existing NAPs have succeeded in closing the accountability gap with respect to Resolution 1325.¹³ Indeed, many countries that have adopted NAPs have also recognized the related shortcomings and are seeking to address them: 17 countries have revised their NAPs; 6 of these have done so more than once.

In light of these challenges, in October 2015, the UN’s global study on the implementation of Resolution 1325 called for more documentation of best practices and lessons learned in the development and implementation of NAPs.¹⁴ This report responds to the global study’s call and seeks to contribute to the nascent body of knowledge on NAPs by exploring four primary research questions:

1. **How are NAPs developed and implemented in diverse conflict-affected contexts?**
2. **How do local civil society groups and government and security institutions interact with each other to create and implement a NAP?**
3. **What impacts have NAPs had on women’s participation in peace and security processes?**
4. **Have NAPs affected collaboration between the state and civil society, and if so, in what ways?**

With these questions in mind, this report uses a qualitative case study approach to examine lessons and insights from the development, implementation, and impact of NAPs in four countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Philippines, Serbia, and Sierra Leone. (For more on how these cases were selected, see Methodology.) As these countries consider revising or renewing their NAPs, this report suggests avenues for advancing progress in each case. However, the report’s broader goal is to explore the challenges and opportunities in the development and implementation of NAPs for policymakers, practitioners, and experts around the world who are looking to create or strengthen national frameworks for advancing inclusive approaches to peace and security.

Methodology

The authors conducted field and desk research for this report from August 2015 to June 2016, including at least two weeks of field research in each of the four countries selected as case studies. In-country interviews were conducted with over 120 policymakers, individuals in the security sector, and individuals in civil society organizations and multilateral or bilateral agencies working on peace, security, gender equality, governance, or human rights.¹⁵ (For a full list of interviewees,

see Appendix II.) This allowed for the collection of data representing a range of views from those creating policy, implementing it, and advocating for change.

To examine development and implementation of each NAP, this data was analyzed using Inclusive Security's "high-impact" NAP framework, which considers four factors: political will, inclusive process, monitoring and evaluation, and financing. Inclusive Security works with governments and civil society organizations that seek to create and strengthen NAPs. It designed a framework for achieving a "high-impact" NAP in 2013, which was later adapted for the UN's global study on the implementation of Resolution 1325.¹⁶ The framework is explained in more detail below.

When exploring a NAP's impact, authors focused primarily on perceptions of impact among interviewees, including the impact of the NAP on collaboration between state actors and civil society. We use the term "civil society" to signify "the arena outside of the family, the state and the market where people associate to advance common interests,"¹⁷ and particularly focus on nongovernmental organizations working on peace and security issues. This report does not represent a technical evaluation of a NAP's outcomes, activities, and indicators (though Inclusive Security has carried out such an assessment for Serbia and a number of other countries not included in this report¹⁸). Rather, it explores broader progress and pitfalls that may offer insights for all those working on NAPs.

Each case study is divided into four sections: first, we begin by examining the big picture of "women, peace, and security" in a given country, offering analysis of the conflict(s), women's roles in peace and security, and broader gender dynamics in society. Second, we turn to the development, implementation, and impact of that country's National Action Plan, drawing on Inclusive Security's high-impact NAP framework. Third, we examine the collaboration between government and civil society in the creation and implementation of the NAP. Fourth, we conclude with challenges, opportunities, and recommendations for diverse stakeholders to help realize the NAP's objectives.

Women's Day panel on change makers and peacekeepers. UN Photo by Eskinder Debebe.

Case and Participant Selection

Case studies were selected with the goal of capturing a diversity of experiences among countries that have been recently affected by conflict (since 1990) *and* have adopted a NAP. By focusing on diverse rather than similar cases, we hope the insights may be germane to a wide variety of conflict-affected countries, even if not representative of all countries. In selecting the cases, variance was considered across three primary dimensions:

1. **PEACE AND SECURITY:** Each country is facing distinct peace and security concerns and has experienced different forms of conflict in the past. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the specter of election-related violence is increasing across the country and rebel activity persists in the east—a remnant of the international wars that took place on Congolese soil in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In the Philippines, the peace process between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front has made substantial progress in ending four decades of armed struggle for self-determination in the country's southern island of Mindanao, but the peace remains fragile as autonomy has not yet been written into law. For Serbia, the Yugoslav Wars officially ended in 1999, but society remains divided as it struggles to come to terms with the past. Sierra Leone's civil war ended in 2002, but it recently faced an unconventional threat to stability and security in the form of the Ebola virus outbreak.
2. **GENDER EQUALITY:** This group of countries has represented the full spectrum of gender inequality levels outlined in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Social Institutions and Gender Inequality Index since 2009. Serbia has consistently been ranked as having very low levels of gender-based discrimination, while the Philippines' rank has varied from very low to medium. Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo have both received rankings varying from high to very high.¹⁹



3. GEOGRAPHY AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS:

The Democratic Republic of Congo, the Philippines, Serbia, and Sierra Leone have each adopted a NAP in a different geographic region: Central Africa, Southeast Asia, South-east Europe, and West Africa. They also represent diverse socioeconomic situations: in the United Nations Development Programme's most recent Human Development Index, Serbia's development level is ranked as high while the Philippines' ranks as medium and the levels in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone rank as low.²⁰

These four countries also offered two useful elements of consistency when it came to their NAPs: all created their NAPs in 2010, allowing researchers to see what five years of implementation looks like in different contexts. In addition, all four countries are considering revisions to their respective NAPs as they consider renewing them after their expiry dates of 2015 and 2016; this presents an occasion to reflect on what has worked and what has not.

After identifying well-informed interviewees working on issues relating to women, peace, and security in each country, we used a "snowball sampling" technique in which respondents suggested additional participants who could share their expertise and experiences. A list of interviewees is available in the Annex. In most instances, we maintained anonymity when quoting interviewees for the security of those involved or because they requested that we do so in order to minimize the possibility of jeopardizing their careers.

This approach has a number of limitations. Each case study represents a snapshot of the situation in each country (or certain parts of each country) rather than a comprehensive study. In all cases, the authors managed to reach a small

number of non-elite subjects from rural rather than urban areas, but the report is primarily informed by those who have some influence over national policy or its implementation, whether as part of the state apparatus or as advocates and service providers in civil society. Finally, when investigating a NAP's impact, the authors relied heavily on interviewees' perceptions of impact in addition to available statistics and evidence of change over time relating to some key objectives in each NAP. This report is not a technical evaluation of each NAP; rather, it explores perceptions and realities of broader change associated with the NAP in each case.

High-Impact NAP Framework

Inclusive Security's high-impact NAP framework draws from the organization's experience supporting governments and civil society organizations to develop and implement NAPs in 32 conflict-affected and donor countries.²¹ The framework comprises four elements to aid understanding of progress and challenges in what are considered to be key building blocks for an effective NAP:

1. STRONG AND SUSTAINED POLITICAL WILL

A NAP's success depends on the commitment of key policymakers at both leadership and technical levels. This could be illustrated by the inclusion of the NAP and its objectives in dialogues, strategies, and government-initiated processes on peace and security—not only in those relating to gender equality or women's rights. It could also be evidenced by political leaders holding those responsible for NAP implementation accountable for the plan's objectives by requiring and reviewing regular progress reports. To sustain

The Bangui National Forum, held in the Central African Republic capital in May 2015. UN Photo by Catianne Tijerina.



this commitment, there may be broad ownership among ministries and agencies across government, and in provincial and local governments as well as the capital.

2. INCLUSIVE PROCESS AND COORDINATION STRUCTURE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

An inclusive process for designing and implementing the NAP helps ensure that the priorities and needs of diverse constituencies are addressed and contributes to a greater sense of legitimacy, buy-in, and ownership of the plan across communities. This means including women and men across government ministries and security agencies implicated in the

NAP’s objectives and activities, as well as including civil society organizations that can offer input on diverse ethnic, social, and religious constituencies’ priorities relating to peace and security from a gendered perspective. Given the difficulties associated with broad-based participation, a coordination structure that facilitates inclusion, ownership, and forward momentum is essential. This structure should include members of relevant government institutions and civil society organizations, all of whom work together to design and implement the plan. The inclusion of civil society organizations is particularly significant in terms of providing an official channel for them to inform and validate the plan. A clear division of roles and responsibilities and transparent decision-making are key components for the success of this structure.

QUALITIES OF A HIGH-IMPACT NAP

1. STRONG AND SUSTAINED POLITICAL WILL

A NAP’s success depends on the commitment of key policymakers, at leadership and technical levels.



2. INCLUSIVE PROCESS AND COORDINATION STRUCTURE

An inclusive process for designing and implementing the NAP helps to ensure that the priorities and needs of diverse constituencies are addressed, and contributes to a greater sense of legitimacy, buy-in, and ownership of the plan across communities.



3. RESULTS-BASED MONITORING & EVALUATION SYSTEM

An established body of knowledge suggests that national plans are more likely to be realized if (1) they are designed with results in mind, (2) they are measurable, and (3) there is a plan for monitoring and evaluation to track implementation.



4. RESOURCES IDENTIFIED AND ALLOCATED

The activities in the NAP need to be realistically analyzed for cost, and the plan itself requires a corresponding and sufficient budget for realizing its objectives and activities.



3. RESULTS-BASED MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

An established body of knowledge suggests that national plans are more likely to be realized if they are designed with results in mind, they are measurable, and there is a plan for monitoring and evaluation to track implementation.²² A results-based monitoring and evaluation system is an important tool to this end. It can be used to collect and manage data and to monitor and evaluate progress toward the NAP’s goals. To ensure accountability, the NAP should include a matrix with clear objectives, activities, lead and supporting agencies, indicators, reporting mechanisms, timeframes, and a budget. Roles and responsibilities for monitoring and evaluation should be established from the outset, and it is important for the monitoring and evaluation system to include a mechanism for oversight. Best practice includes annual reporting on results by the lead implementing agencies and a midterm and final review of the NAP.

4. RESOURCES IDENTIFIED AND ALLOCATED FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Without the necessary resources, there is little chance of operationalizing the objectives in the NAP. NAP activities therefore need to be realistically analyzed for cost and the plan itself

The high-impact NAP framework was created by Inclusive Security.

requires a corresponding and sufficient budget for realizing its objectives and activities. Funds allocated for activities then need to be disbursed to the implementing agencies, ideally using a transparent financing mechanism that includes a system for tracking and reporting.

No NAP has yet succeeded in reaching high-impact status (though some are on their way). And these components may seem like lofty goals compared to the reality in most countries: for example, only 11 of 47 NAPs reviewed in 2014 specified a budget.²³ Nonetheless, this framework provides useful parameters for assessing obstacles to progress and opportunities for success.

NOTES

1. For the latest figures showing an increase in the number of conflicts between 2010 and 2015, see the Uppsala Conflict Data Program at <http://ucdp.uu.se/#/encyclopedia>; on record levels of global displacement, see United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Trends 2015* (Geneva, June 2016).
2. Marie O'Reilly, Andrea O'Suilleabhain, and Thania Paffenholz, "Reimagining Peacemaking: Women's Roles in Peace Processes," New York: International Peace Institute, June 2015.
3. For a survey of scholarly literature on this topic, including the correlations between women in politics and peace and women's influence on post-conflict peacebuilding, see Marie O'Reilly, "Why Women? Inclusive Security and Peaceful Societies," Washington, DC: The Institute for Inclusive Security, October 2015.
4. Aisling Swaine, "Assessing the Potential of National Action Plans to Advance Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325," *Yearbook of International Humanitarian Law* 12 (2009): p. 403–433, at 409–410.
5. Pablo Castillo Diaz and Simon Tordjman, eds., "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence" (New York: UN Women, 2012), <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2012/10/wps-sourcebook-03a-women-peacenegotiations-en.pdf>.
6. See, for example, UN Security Council, "Statement by the President of the Security Council," October 31, 2002, UN Doc. S/PRST/2002/32; UN Security Council, "Women and Peace and Security: Report of the Secretary-General," October 13, 2004, UN Doc. S/2004/814; UN Security Council, "Statement by the President of the Security Council," March 7, 2007, UN Doc. S/PRST/2007/5; UN Security Council, "Women and Peace and Security: Report of the Secretary-General," September 25, 2008, UN Doc. S/2008/622.
7. UN Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General on Women and Peace and Security," September 12, 2007, UN Doc. S/2007/567, para. 36.
8. For a list of these countries, see the Annex.
9. Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007); World Bank, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2011).
10. Timothy D. Sisk, ed., *Democracy at the Local Level* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2001), p. 147.
11. *Ibid.*; Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
12. See, for example, Barbara Miller, Milad Pournik, and Aisling Swaine, "Women in Peace and Security through United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325: Literature Review, Content Analysis of National Action Plans, and Implementation," Washington, DC: Institute for Global and International Studies working paper 13/GGP WP 09, May 2014, http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/NationalActionPlans/miladpournikanalysisdocs/igis_womeninpeaceandsecuritythroughunsr1325_millerpournikswaine_2014.pdf, p. 18.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

14. Radhika Coomaraswamy et al., “Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325,” New York: UN Women, 2015, p. 250.
15. We use the Cambridge dictionary’s definition of policymaker: “a member of a government department, legislature, or other organization who is responsible for making new rules, laws, etc.” Security sector interviewees mostly included those working in the armed forces and police forces. Civil society organizations include national and international civil society organizations, where civil society is defined as “the arena, outside of the family, the state, and the market, which is created by individual and collective actions, organizations and institutions to advance shared interests” per the CIVICUS Civil Society Index. A small number of interviewees did not fit squarely in any of these categories and were selected for individual areas of expertise or ability to provide additional context rather than the nature of their organizations.
16. For more information on “high-impact” NAPs, including a training course, see <https://actionplans.inclusivesecurity.org/>. See also Zsuzsanna Lippai and Angelic Young, *What Matters Most: Measuring Plans for Inclusive Security* (Washington, DC: Inclusive Security, 2014). In 2015, the high-impact NAP framework was adapted for the UN’s global study on women, peace, and security—see Radhika Coomaraswamy et al., “Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325,” New York: UN Women, 2015, ch. 10.
17. V. F. Heinrich, “Assessing and Strengthening Civil Society Worldwide. A Project Description of the CIVICUS Civil Society Index: A Participatory Needs Assessment and Action-Planning Tool for Society,” 2004, online at <http://www.civicus.org>, CSI, Documents and Publications section.
18. Inclusive Security has carried out full technical evaluations of NAPs for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Finland, Liberia, and Serbia, and a variety of assessments for other countries. Some of these are available online. See, for example, Angelic Young and Mariam Mansury, “Assessment of Canada’s Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security 2010–2016,” Washington, DC: Inclusive Security, September 15, 2014, http://www.international.gc.ca/start-gtsr/assets/pdfs/Canada_Action_Plan_Women_Peace_Security-2010-2016.pdf.
19. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, “Atlas of Gender and Development: How Social Norms Affect Gender Equality in Non-OECD Countries,” Paris: OECD, 2010; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, “2012 Social Institutions and Gender Index: Understanding the Drivers of Gender Inequality,” Paris: OECD, 2012; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, “Social Institutions and Gender Index 2014 Synthesis Report,” Paris: OECD, 2014. Note that Serbia was not included in the 2009 rankings (published in 2010). This report uses the terminology of the 2014 report to describe five categories of very low, low, medium, high, and very high, which were labeled slightly differently in 2010. The 2012 report does not explicitly use five categories but these can be inferred from the numerical ranking.
20. United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2015* (New York: United Nations, 2015), Table 1: Human Development Index, available at hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI.
21. Inclusive Security has worked with NAP practitioners in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Brazil, Canada, Finland, Indonesia, Jordan, Liberia, Moldova, Montenegro, Nigeria, the Netherlands, Serbia, Sudan, Ukraine, and the United States. It has shared its expertise with practitioners in an additional 16 countries through trainings and convenings.
22. See, for example, United Nations Development Group, “Results-Based Management Handbook,” October 2011; Gavin Lawrie, Dirk Kalf, and Henrik Andersen, “Balanced Scorecard and Results-Based Management: Convergent Performance Management Systems,” Berkshire, UK: 2GC Active Management, April 2015. See also Lippai and Young, *What Matters Most: Measuring Plans for Inclusive Security*.
23. Malika Bhandarkar, “Mapping Progress of WPS Action Plans,” New York: UN Women, August 2014, cited in Coomaraswamy, “Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace,” p. 246.

THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

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Forming a cohesive women's movement is a challenge in a country the size of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Yet Congolese women's organizations overcame many obstacles in the early 2000s to unite and influence their country's peace process, and overcame many more in the late 2000s to create the country's first NAP. Although the development of the NAP was inclusive, its implementation has been very uneven. On one hand, significant attention has been paid to reducing conflict-related sexual violence, with some indications that the efforts are having positive results. On the other hand, women's participation in peace and security processes does not appear to have increased, although there has been some progress in shifting attitudes in the police. In fact, new obstacles to women's participation in politics—the key route to accessing and influencing peace and security processes in Congo—have emerged in recent years. In general, the issue of sexual violence has attracted the bulk of external attention in Congo, even if prevention efforts and adequate treatment for survivors remain insufficient. Support for the participation elements of the NAP fall further behind again. If international and national actors could rally around the idea of women's leadership for peace and security in Congo, a more holistic approach could succeed in better addressing these challenges.

1. WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

With multiple armed groups targeting civilians in the country's east, and mounting risks of election-related violence and unrest across the country, Congolese citizens are facing significant security challenges. Women also face high levels of gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. Despite significant obstacles, including having a vast territory across which peace and security priorities vary significantly, many women's organizations are active in peacebuilding activities at both the community and national levels. In the past, Congolese women succeeded in uniting across divides to influence their country's formal peace process. Today, there are indications that a new women's movement may be emerging in a push for greater political participation, which could in turn allow for greater influence on peace and security. This case study focuses on challenges in North Kivu in the country's east and also in and around the capital Kinshasa; the authors conducted field research in both places in February 2016.

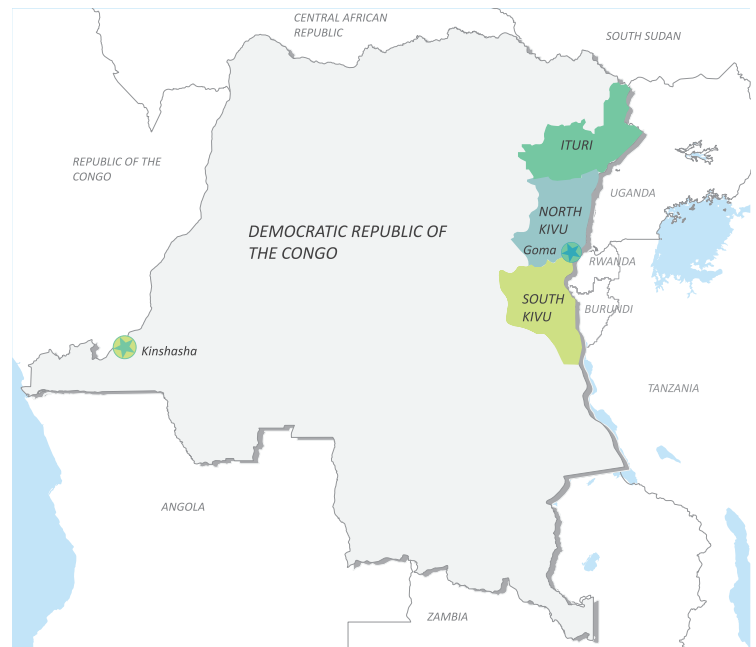
“*We say, get one woman into politics and politics will change her. But many women in politics will change politics for the good of society.* - Human Rights Activist”

Conflict Analysis

The Second Congo War formally ended in 2003 with the signing of the Pretoria Accords, after the deaths of more than three million people from violence and the accompanying starvation and disease.¹ But multiple conflicts persist in the Democratic Republic of Congo² at local, regional, and national levels. Eastern Congo is the worst affected: an estimated 70 armed groups remain active in North and South Kivu provinces.³ Murky alliances link some groups to neighboring states such as Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi, a legacy of the Rwandan genocide and the First and Second Congo Wars, when seven countries fought on Congolese soil. Others are backed by the Congolese state itself, serve as local self-defense militias, or may be better described as ragtag groups of bandits seeking profit with some pretense of ideology.

Nature of the Conflict

The causes of conflict in Congo's eastern provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri are linked to governance, grievance, and greed, as well as ethnic tensions and regional interests. Particular motives may vary, but armed groups have emerged in the absence of state authority and amid experiences (and perceptions) of marginalization, persecution, and poverty. They exhibit the struggle for power and profit that the region's abundant natural resources—and exploitation of the local population—can supply. Indeed, while some groups fight each other, nearly all prey on civilians.⁴ Neither the Congolese state nor the UN peacekeeping mission known as MONUSCO can offer sufficient protection.

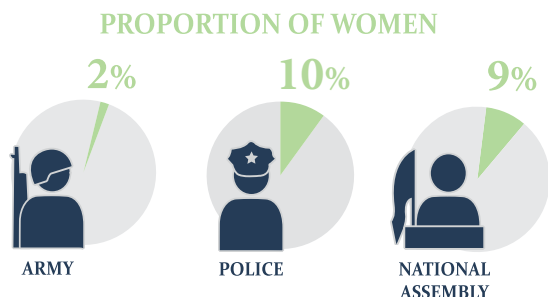


The majority of the Congolese have not taken up arms in this conflict, and men and women play a range of diverse roles in both advancing peace and fomenting war. Nonetheless, women are far less likely to belong to these armed groups and

are far more likely to endure the brutalities of widespread conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by armed groups' attacks, though men are also subjected to sexual violence to a lesser extent.⁵ Members of the national army have also committed acts of sexual violence, sometimes taking women as "payment" when they do not get their salary from the state.⁶ For example, as Congolese troops retreated from the M23 rebel group's advance on the city of Goma in 2012, the UN reported that they "systematically" raped at least 102 women and 33 girls.⁷

“Who is securing whom? We [women] are not secured by anyone.” - Human Rights Activist

Since these soldiers and their commanders are rarely brought to justice, the security of the state, as defended by the national army, is built on a foundation of making women insecure.⁸ This is not a new phenomenon: King Leopold's army of conscripts carried out widespread rape of women under colonial rule, setting a precedent for pervasive gender-based violence in the conflicts that unfolded a century later.⁹ And though women are active in peacebuilding in local communities, they have little say in national security policy and practice: women make up just 2% of the Congolese army, an estimated 10% of the police, and 9% of the National Assembly.¹⁰ So, as one woman from eastern Congo asked, "who is securing whom?"



Peace Process

The current regional framework for peace in Congo and the Great Lakes region was signed by 11 African states in 2013, backed by the UN. On paper, the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework represents a valuable attempt to address at least two root causes of conflict in Congo: the Congolese government committed to reforming the state structures, including the security sector, and neighboring states committed to ending support to armed groups in Congolese territory. These central challenges have persisted despite the Inter-Congolese Dialogue that concluded at Sun City in South Africa in 2003, which led to a political transition but fell short of deep political reform or regional reconciliation.

Despite women's presence in Sun City in the early 2000s, the creation and implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework has largely been an exclusive affair. Not a single signatory was a woman, and women have had little say in shaping its enactment, despite their efforts to create a Great Lakes Women's Platform for this purpose. The

“We were lobbying until the day we signed the final global accord. But as soon as the agreement was signed, women were left to their own devices. International support was withdrawn. We didn't have the means to capitalize on our experiences in Sun City.” - Human Rights Activist

document and its associated action plans largely fail to address the role that gender plays in the conflict or opportunities for women and others beyond the belligerents to contribute to building peace.¹¹ More than one interviewee suggested that the framework is now "dead," or at least comatose, particularly in light of heightened regional tensions. A recent study suggests that the framework remains vital but that most believe the framework has made little progress in practice.¹²

Post-conflict Justice and Reconciliation

The International Criminal Court has convicted three Congolese warlords of war crimes and crimes against humanity. In 2012, it found Thomas Lubanga guilty of recruiting and using child soldiers in the Patriotic Force for the Liberation of Congo. In 2014, it convicted Germain Katanga of murder, attacking civilians, and pillaging as alleged commander of the Patriotic Resistance Front in Ituri. In 2016, in its first trial to focus on sexual violence as a war crime, the court found former Congolese vice-president Jean-Pierre Bemba guilty of the mass rape and murder of civilians committed by his rebel group in the Central African Republic in 2002 and 2003. In 2015, the court began the trial of notorious warlord Bosco Ntaganda, who faces 18 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity including murder, attacks against civilians, rape, and sexual slavery.¹³

Beyond these high-profile international cases, however, domestic justice for war crimes and in particular for continued sexual violence has lagged. This remains true despite some advances following President Joseph Kabila's appointment of a special representative to reduce sexual violence. The low number of prosecutions may be partly explained by the low numbers of women in the Congolese judiciary.¹⁴ Despite national consultations for "greater national cohesion" in 2013, reconciliation appears elusive. In fact, failure to address the underlying causes of the conflict, establish the rule of law, and reconcile now means that insecurity stretches far beyond the east for men and women alike. As the president has indicated his desire to delay presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for 2016, instability has increased significantly in opposition strongholds across the country. In January 2015, at least 42 protesters were killed by security forces.¹⁵ As members of the opposition continue to be arrested as of 2016, political tensions are increasing.

Women's Participation in Peace and Security

Between 1999 and 2003, the Lusaka-Sun City peace process slowly brought an official end to the Second Congo War. The 1999 Lusaka ceasefire agreement determined who

would participate in the broader inter-Congolese dialogue that followed, but did not specify the inclusion of women. Partly as a result of this, there were only 6 women among the 73 delegates to the inter-Congolese dialogue initially: 8%.¹⁶ Excluded from the process, women from government, rebel groups, and civil society then came together in their own parallel workshop in Nairobi, supported by a number of nongovernmental organizations and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (now UN Women). They united across conflict lines and articulated their demands for peace in the Nairobi Declaration, which included calls for an end to the conflict, withdrawal of foreign troops, the application of good governance, and the institution of an emergency humanitarian program, among other priorities. They also lobbied for greater gender sensitivity in the inter-Congolese dialogue and the inclusion of the needs of vulnerable groups.¹⁷ After they pushed the facilitator of the peace process and other key stakeholders to increase women's participation in the talks, the proportion of women in the broader dialogue increased to 12% of delegates.¹⁸

“ *In Nairobi, we were perceived as demons because we were part of the rebellion. The first and second day we could barely even look at each other. But after a couple of days we came together. [We saw that] conflict touches everyone.* - Human Rights Activist ”

These female delegates within the Sun City talks also pushed for gender-sensitive provisions in the agreement and to help ensure that a peace accord would be reached. They secured provisions on legislative reforms to ensure at least 30% political participation by women in all public institutions, and gender-sensitive revision of the constitution and discriminatory Family Code.¹⁹ At the eleventh hour, when it seemed the final agreement would not be signed, they formed a human chain to prevent the male negotiators from leaving the room until they signed the final accord.²⁰ Nonetheless, women's influence and impact was constrained by a number of factors: the selection procedure and the small proportion of female delegates it produced; the perception of women's subordinate role in the political arena; and the control the male-dominated conflict parties wielded over decision-making at the expense of unarmed civil society actors and women.²¹

Despite the obstacles, Sun City and women's concomitant activism on the sidelines of the talks represented a high point in women's participation in peace and security processes in the Congo. Women were barely represented, if at all, in the slew of peace accords that followed Congo's transition to democracy over the next three years (many seeking to address the unfinished business of Sun City)—the 2006 Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region; the 2008 Commitment Act in Goma; the 2009 peace accord between the Congolese government and the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP) rebel group; the 2013 talks between the government and M23; and the 2013 Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework described

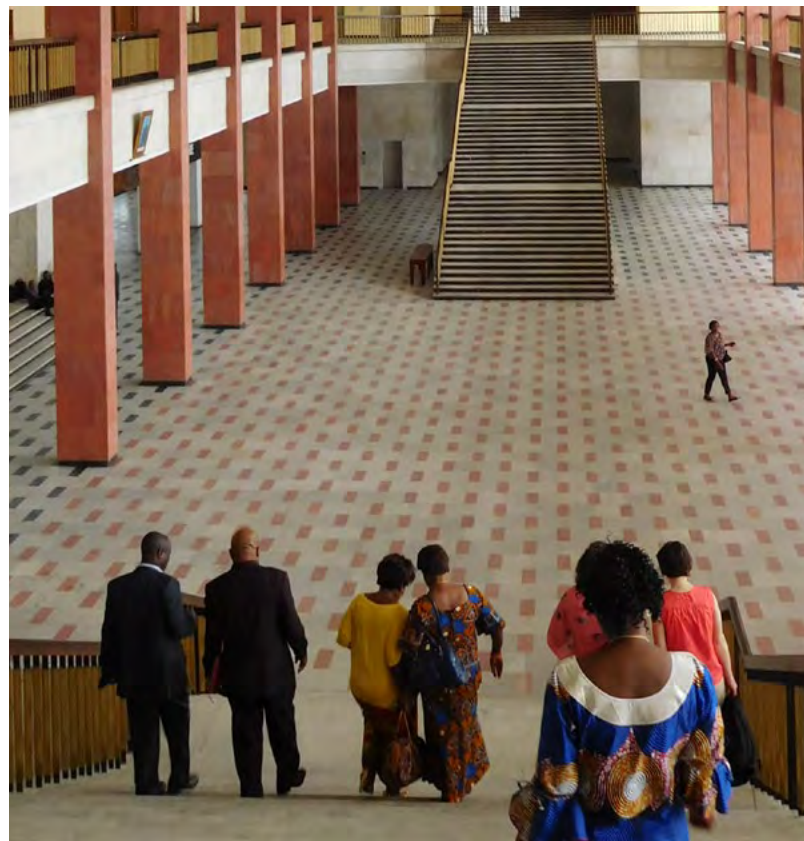
above.²² The national consultations in 2013 represented an exception, with 12% female participants, though these were closer to a national dialogue than a peace process.²³

Conflict-related sexual violence against women has persisted in parallel with women's under-representation in peace and security processes.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, conflict-related sexual violence against women has persisted in parallel with women's under-representation in these peace and security processes. Congo became known as the “rape capital of the world” over the past decade, after Margot Wallström, who was the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict at the time, returned from a trip to Congo in 2010.²⁴ In particular, the use of rape *as a weapon of war* has occupied the spotlight. Just as armed groups manipulate tensions over ethnicity and access to land, they also exploit militarized notions of masculinity, women's marginalized position in Congolese society, and a culture of impunity to further their goals and justify violence. In July and August of 2010, for example, rebels in the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) teamed up with other groups to carry out mass rape of more than 300 civilians, mostly women, over three days in mineral-rich Walikale Territory. Analysts suspect they did so to impose their authority over the area, to gain access to nearby mines to finance their activities, and possibly to punish the local population for perceived support of the Congolese army.²⁵

Government and civil society actors have made strides in opening up the conversation on the previously taboo subject of sexual violence, and many nongovernmental organizations are responding valiantly to these brutal crimes in providing assistance to victims, often with international support. However, since Sun City, interviewees suggest that

Parliament building in Kinshasa. Photo by Alexandra Amling.



international funding flows relating to women's participation in *decision-making* around peace and security has not kept pace with the focus on protection.

“*At Sun City we had a lot of financial backing for participation, but today all of the resources go to sexual violence.*

- Civil Society Representative



Women meet in Kinshasha. Photo by Alexandra Amling.

The weak representation of women in official peacemaking processes masks Congolese women's dynamic efforts to build peace in civil society. There are about 5,000 nongovernmental organizations registered in Congo,²⁶ and an array of women-led organizations work on peace and security issues in particular. The wealth of women's activism in this field has been recognized by outsiders. After 11 men signed the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework in 2013, UN Special Envoy Mary Robinson supported a number of local and regional nongovernmental organizations to create the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework across Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda. But few funders backed the idea, and Robinson left the post after one year, replaced by Said Djinnit. The platform has since disbursed some small grants to women's peacebuilding organizations but has not facilitated meetings between women and decision-makers in the peace process. Many interviewees were unaware of the platform's status; others suggested it was not achieving its goals.²⁷ Special Envoy Robinson also supported the creation of a Regional Action Plan for implementing Resolution 1325 across the Great Lakes, which may prove to be more sustainable.²⁸

Despite the numerous peace processes, most interviewees reported that the root causes of the conflict have not been addressed in Congo, and violence in many forms continues to plague the population. As a result, the security sector remains a significant tool employed in efforts to establish peace and stability in the country. But many interviewees echoed the sentiment of one civil society representative: “The security sector works without women, and that's not security.”

Gender Dynamics

Egregious as it is, the prevalence of rape as a weapon of war is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the security of more than half of Congo's population. In eastern Congo, the broader effects of conflict also contribute to extremely high rates of *domestic* violence against women: half of all women in North Kivu have experienced physical violence at the hands of their intimate partner.²⁹ Nationwide, 57% of women say they have suffered some form of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime.³⁰ The presence of women in security forces increases the likelihood that female citizens will report their experiences with gender-based violence.³¹ In Congo, women comprise 11% of local police chiefs (*commissaires*)³² and less

than 3% of troops and just 2% of officers in the Congolese military. Few serve in combat roles.³³ Three women were promoted to the rank of General in 2013, in the areas of logistics, administration, and veterans' affairs.³⁴

“*There are too many prejudices. That women are weak, that when there's not enough money, the girls stay home while the boys go to school. We need behavior change.*

- Civil Society Representative

In fact, women are discriminated against across political, social, and economic spheres: Congo ranks 147th out of 152 countries in the composite Gender Equality Index. Eight percent of parliamentarians are women; just 11% of women over the age of 25 have some secondary education (compared to 36% of men); and 62% of women live in poverty (compared to 59% of men).³⁵ Beyond frequent violations of their physical safety, women face discrimination in access to resources (e.g., women rarely inherit land), and men continue to dominate decision-making in the home. Though progress has been made in the realm of primary school education, the persistent imbalance in educational outcomes is emblematic of the institutionalized bias toward sons, boys, and men in Congolese society. In cross-national studies, scholars have found a strong association between systemic sexual and gender-based violence in conflict-affected contexts and precisely these elements of discriminatory societal norms.³⁶ Yet attention paid to victims of sexual violence has not been accompanied by an equivalent momentum for women's access to public space or participation in peace and security decision-making—arguably a game-changer for combatting sexual violence *and* strengthening peace and stability for society as a whole.³⁷

“*We are doing big things but it's not documented. We went to meet rebel leader Laurent Nkunda in the bush, to Rwanda to meet the Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the Kampala negotiations in 2010-2012. We've written policy documents to feed into peace processes abroad and carried out sit-ins and demonstrations for peace downtown.*

- Civil Society Representative

In fact, many Congolese women in civil society are hoarse from advocating for change, but too often they remain unheard in a system that fails to recognize them as equals. There has not been a meaningful increase in women's participation in politics over the past decade. In the 2006–2011 legislature, 8% of

National Assembly deputies and 5% of senators were women; in the 2016 legislature (formed in 2012), the figures are 9% and 5%, respectively.³⁸ Recently, women’s representation at the provincial level increased somewhat through nominations: a number of women were among the newly appointed “special commissioners” assisting with replacing male governors (though this doesn’t guarantee women’s representation among governors when they are newly elected).

Even when they enter the halls of power, women remain largely invisible. In parliament, only heads of delegations are invited to speak on record in front of the camera, and there are no women among the heads of delegations.³⁹ To get into the parliament in the first place, women must break through layers upon layers of barriers. Most cannot afford to pay for the “gifts” that constituents expect in return for their votes, let alone the newly issued fee to register as a candidate—a fee roughly the equivalent of US\$500.⁴⁰ Moreover, “you need your husband’s permission to work in politics,” one former parliamentarian told us. “Going into politics has negative repercussions at home. You need a strong husband behind you to face seven men challenging you at work.” With the 2016 elections in limbo and mounting repression of the political opposition, women face an added layer of uncertainty and risk in their efforts to change sociocultural norms and get elected.

Existing Legal Framework

Despite the barriers women face, Congo has a plethora of national legislation supporting gender equality broadly and parity in public institutions more specifically. The 2006 Constitution, influenced by women’s advocacy in Sun City, established these principles in Articles 5, 14, and 15.⁴¹ In the same year, the government passed a law against sexual and gender-based violence, and in 2009 it developed the National Gender Policy to eliminate discrimination.

The Democratic Republic of Congo has also ratified several international and regional documents, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1986,⁴² the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in 2002,⁴³ and the Maputo Protocol,⁴⁴ which spells out the rights of women under the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, in 2008.

Nonetheless, there is a huge implementation gap overall. As one interviewee put it, “We have laws that promote equal opportunity for all, but we also have different realities.” And many legal barriers remain. The Family Code from 1987 defines men as heads of households and requires women to get permission from their husbands to open a bank account, purchase land, or travel. As of mid-2016, the code was under revision, though it is not clear whether all of the discriminatory issues will be resolved. In addition, the 2015 parity law was

There is not a single woman among the eleven judges in the new Constitutional Court.

rendered toothless after the Constitutional Court ruled the initial bill’s 30% quota for women was unconstitutional. In 2015, the senate also dropped provisions for quotas and positive discrimination that had been included in the new electoral law and introduced new obstacles for women’s participation in politics (discussed further below). Meanwhile, there is not a single woman among the 11 judges in the new Constitutional Court.

2. THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY

In a country where many of those active in peace and security issues report familiarity with UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and say they have used it frequently in their advocacy and training work, the National Action Plan for implementing this resolution represents an opportunity to make Resolution 1325’s goals a reality. As the National Gender Policy of 2009 and its accompanying action plan laid out a framework for advancing gender equality more broadly in Congo, the National Action Plan for 1325 (NAP) published in 2010 and revised in 2013 focuses on the nexus of gender, peace, and security in the country. It revolves around 10 focal areas relating to some of the most pressing issues in the Congolese context, including women’s roles in peacemaking and in the security sector, sexual and gender-based violence, political participation, and the rule of law (see box).

| DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO’S NATIONAL ACTION PLAN | |
|---|---|
| 2010-2015 (REVISED 2013) | |
| HOSTED BY: | The Ministry of Women, Family, and Children |
| BUDGET ESTIMATE: | US \$59,198,881 |
| FOCAL AREAS: | Peace |
| | Security |
| | Sexual and gender-based violence |
| | HIV/AIDS |
| | Women’s rights |
| | Political participation |
| | Consolidation of rule of law |
| | Regional and international cooperation |
| | Research and documentation |
| | Monitoring and evaluation |

As such, it is comprehensive in scope—although some respondents saw this as a drawback, arguing that a narrower focus would be more effective. Nonetheless, there is much less familiarity with the NAP than with its progenitor Resolution

1325, and due to issues of political will, coordination, and financing, implementation has proved to be challenging.

The implementation of the National Action Plan is monitored by a National Steering Committee as well as committees on the provincial and local levels. Findings suggest, however, that only the National Steering Committee seems to be functional. As of 2015, only two provinces had been able to set up a Provincial Steering Committee.⁴⁵

Development and Implementation of the National Action Plan

In the late 2000s, civil society organizations conducted two studies of women, peace, and security in the Congo and in the Great Lakes region, respectively, to form the basis for the NAP. The president of the parliament then inaugurated the NAP in 2010. In 2011, representatives from 11 provinces came to Kinshasa to give their input on the plan, and the revised 2013 version is more robust as a result.⁴⁶

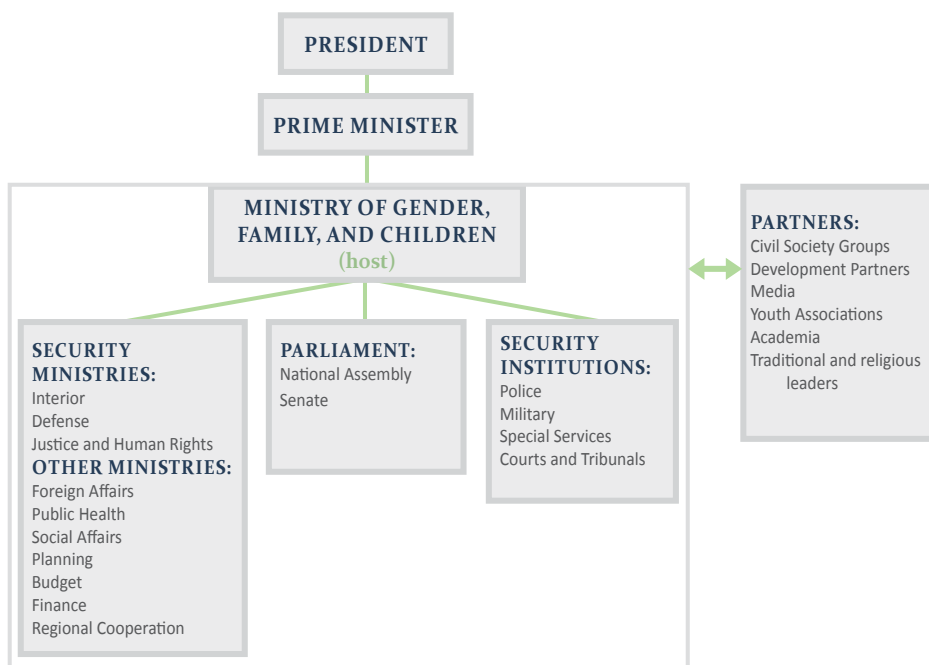
There are many individuals in parliament and government ministries who support the advancement of women's participation in policymaking and peacemaking, as evidenced by the cross-party parliamentary Network on Gender and Parity, which started in 2004. When a strong push for the plan emerged from civil society groups working on women, peace, and security, the government was willing to engage and facilitate participation across ministries, creating Africa's sixth National Action Plan.

“The politicians accepted to advance the plan; they collected our reports and made the national report on the implementation of 1325 last year. But concretely there is no will. They are not financing the secretariat.

- Human Rights Activist

However, many interviewees suggested that this **political will** did not extend beyond the creation of the NAP in 2010 and its revision in 2013. Implementation has been selective at best: state actors have contributed to advancing work in some areas, such as sexual and gender-based violence and police reform (discussed in the next section, on impact), but these activities are not always coordinated with the NAP, and activities in many other focal areas remain dormant in terms of state support. Some interviewees suggested the plan has been kept at arm's length from the real mechanisms of power: “We got focal points in all the ministries but the people selected did not have influence and they were put in offices far away from

National Steering Committee: Stakeholders Involved in NAP Implementation*



*Interpretation of how NAP was designed for monitoring implementation.

the ministries,” said one civil society activist involved in the process. In short, as a whole, political will for *implementing* the NAP is weak.

A similar disconnect between the approach to creating the NAP versus its subsequent implementation is evident in the dynamic of collaboration and inclusion. Numerous interviewees reported an **inclusive process and coordination** in the development of the NAP, involving a governmental commission, a parliamentary committee, and civil society organizations. Indeed, civil society's support to the government was instrumental not just in terms of creating momentum for the NAP but also in terms of providing the expertise and capacity that ministries often lacked. “If it was just left up to the [gender] ministry, nothing would have happened,” one interviewee from civil society reported. “But everyone contributed to the NAP; the process was inclusive.”

However, many civil society organizations report a deterioration in inclusion and coordination following the plan's creation. In theory, implementation continues to be inclusive between state actors and civil society: 10 out of 40 members of the steering committee for the NAP represent civil society organizations.⁴⁷ In practice, however, “collaboration is a function of individual relations. A new gender minister will arrive with a new group and idea to follow, and we won't know what's happening.”

Given the significant international peacekeeping presence in Congo, coordination and collaboration with the UN also



Members of a civil society organization. Photo by Alexandra Amling.

deserves attention in this case. Even if UN actors are not equal stakeholders in this national plan, the NAP presents an opportunity for them to coordinate and align their activities in this area more closely and coherently with national priorities. In reality, disconnects persist not only between the NAP and UN actors but also among UN actors: the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence, UN Women, the peacekeeping mission MONUSCO, and the UN Population Fund. Interviewees also reported a lack of coordination on gender-related activities *within* MONUSCO. As the Gender Advisory Section focuses on gender mainstreaming throughout the mission's strategic planning and operational activities,⁴⁸ the Stabilization Support Unit supports gender mainstreaming in capacity-building initiatives as it prepares for the eventual drawdown of peacekeeping forces. Indeed, one of the pillars of the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy that guides the Stabilization Support Unit's work focuses on sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, but again few connections have been made between this and the work of the president's special representative on the same subject, or the NAP.

“*The plan is good, well written, but every organization is just doing their own thing in an uncoordinated way.*”
- Human Rights Activist

The importance of **monitoring and evaluation** is recognized in the NAP; the tenth focal area is dedicated to this. But the plan does not have a fixed timeframe to measure progress against; its objectives, outcomes, and indicators are not consistently coherent or quantified; and roles and responsibilities are not clearly delineated.⁴⁹ In their 2015 report on 15 years of Resolution 1325 in Congo, the government and civil society experts concluded that “this area has not seen advances.”⁵⁰

One frequently articulated view is that “there’s no evaluation because there’s no implementation”—in other words, beyond creating structures and frameworks, there is no action to evaluate. In reality, many civil society organizations and some state actors are continuing their work in myriad areas relating to women, peace, and security, but this work is seldom linked

back to the plan. Comprehensive monitoring and evaluation could capture this work on the ground and contribute to greater coherence and a sense of progress against the goals that have been agreed upon in this nationally-owned framework. In 2015, civil society organizations produced a monitoring report along these lines, examining the implementation of Resolution 1325 more broadly against international indicators while also making reference to the NAP.⁵¹ The Congolese government and UN Women recently published a similar document assessing 15 years of Resolution 1325 in Congo, drawing expertise from a number of NGOs. This shows that the will and capacity exist, particularly among civil society organizations. But overall these efforts to monitor and evaluate progress remain irregular and somewhat disconnected from the NAP’s particular objectives, outcomes, and indicators.

Whether for implementing the plan or monitoring its implementation, **financial resources** are clearly lacking. On paper, the plan’s log frame is costed at US\$59 million.⁵² At the national level, however, many interviewees in civil society reported that “the government is not financing the plan: there’s no budget and there are no funds in the Ministry [for Women].” Staff at the Ministry for Women, Family, and Children, which owns the NAP, agree: “The means are not enough to implement the NAP, this is the great challenge.”

“*We don’t always have the money, but we’re taking action anyway.*” - Government Representative

International partners have attempted to fill this gap, but are reluctant to funnel money through what is seen as a weak ministry (the recent change in the ministry’s name, from “gender” to “women,” is perhaps telling in this respect).⁵³ Initially, when donors signed up to fund the plan, the money ended up being diverted to support gender-related work through MONUSCO. More recently, Belgium committed financial support for implementing the NAP via UN Women, which has helped create a new permanent secretariat for 1325 within the ministry, as well as a trust fund. But neither the permanent secretariat nor the trust fund is operational yet, and it is not clear how they will interact with other structures like the existing steering committee for implementing the NAP.

Indeed, even if some funds exist, civil society organizations undertaking activities to implement the plan suggest these funds are very difficult to access. “We don’t receive support from the government—maybe moral support, but if there are no funds...,” one civil society representative reported. Others suggest that they continue to implement the plan as best they can, regardless: “We don’t always have the money, but we’re taking action anyway,” said a former parliamentarian who now works on women’s participation in politics.

Impact of the National Action Plan

Solid data and statistics are hard to come by in Congo, so it is difficult to reliably measure improvement in the NAP's focal areas since 2010. In part, this is due to lack of a robust data collection mechanism and monitoring and evaluation system for the NAP. Nonetheless, the civil society monitoring report published by the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (which draws on a variety of data) measured "slight progress" in multiple areas during this time: women's participation in governance, gender sensitivity in peace negotiations, women's participation in the justice and security sectors, and some positive indicators in the struggle against sexual and gender-based violence.⁵⁴ It is unclear to what extent this slight progress was driven by the NAP.

The more recent report published by the Congolese government and UN Women indicates some progress as a result of the NAP but also acknowledges that "at this time, the National Action Plan has not been entirely implemented due to financial constraints, weak government involvement, insufficient strengthening of implementing actors' capacity... and lack of coordination among partners on the ground."⁵⁵ This echoes the sentiments of nearly all those interviewed for this report.



We share a lot of reports with the government, they participate in our meetings, but they don't follow through and they don't give feedback. There's a lack of interest.

- Human Rights Activist



About 90% of organizations working on issues relating to Resolution 1325 report knowing about the National Action Plan, but only 40% are undertaking activities coherently aligned with the plan.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, many are working toward a number of the plan's goals, even if this work is not systematically tracked or linked. One trend worth exploring in this context of variable impact is the emphasis on women's *protection* relative to women's *participation* in peace and security.

Participation

Despite the 2010 National Action Plan and its more robust 2013 successor, women's participation in high-level peace negotiations has not increased since the 2002 Inter-Congolese Dialogue, as described above; in most cases it has declined.⁵⁷ High-level peacemaking in Congo, as in many places, has remained the domain of political elites and rebel leaders. So, women need to become politicians (or take up arms) in order to influence significant peace and security decisions.

However, the case can be made that prospects for women's participation in politics have deteriorated since 2010, despite some measures of "slight progress." The new electoral law and parity law arguably create new obstacles to women's participation rather than strengthening it. These obstacles include an increase in the registration cost to become a

candidate; it has been determined that quotas for women are unconstitutional (despite constitutional guarantees of parity); and—perhaps most importantly—the politics of *glissement* (slippery stalling) have delayed the elections planned for 2016. As political repression increases in this context and opposition candidates are arrested,⁵⁸ the risks have increased for any already-marginalized groups seeking to campaign for election. Multiple women who hold or have held high political office shared the sentiment that "Often when women speak up within their party, they get pushed out."⁵⁹ In a higher-risk environment, women appear even less likely to participate.

All of this has happened despite numerous women's organizations in civil society and individuals in government working to pass and then reform the electoral law and the parity law, working to help women campaign to become political candidates, and working to advance women's voices in peace talks.⁶⁰

Since passage of the NAP, there seems to be an opening for increasing women's participation in the police. This is a positive development, with the potential, as seen in other countries, to lead to de-escalation of conflict, improvements in police–community relations, and increases in reporting of sexual and gender-based violence.⁶¹ The Center for the Study of Justice and Resolution 1325 in Kinshasa took responsibility for the Security focal area of the NAP among civil society organizations, and has been pursuing its goals through training and education, embedding them in the wider framework for reforming the police. The police force now has a goal of 30% women's participation (which was estimated at 6% in 2010) and is working to incorporate gender considerations in the nomination, recruitment, and promotion processes within the force.⁶² Those advancing reform among the police recognize the importance of women's participation for increasing confidence in the police force and adapting to a "community policing" approach.⁶³



Today, women can talk to the police when they see commandants that are women ... But I always find myself alone in security meetings... If we really want more change should get women at the [highest levels] of the Ministry of Defense. - Government Representative



Space for reform in the Congolese army is much narrower. Despite Congo's history of celebrating and supporting its female service members in the late 1960s and early 1970s with its famed 250-woman paratrooper unit, the conditions in the army have deteriorated so dramatically in the intervening decades that the participation of women has declined and is estimated at 2%.⁶⁴ Interviewees again reported that a significant obstacle to reform in this regard was political will. In the words of one civil society leader, "The army is a very sensitive issue for the president. The Defense Ministry [is] not as open as other ministries. NGOs are told this is not their area." Individuals in government echoed this sentiment.

Protection

The weak political will, lack of financing, and other hurdles broadly associated with the NAP stand in sharp contrast with the strong drive to tackle conflict-related sexual violence in parallel to the implementation of the NAP. In the NAP's log frame, the budget estimate for combatting sexual violence was over US\$28 million, while the estimate for women's participation in peace processes and in politics came out to US\$18 million combined.⁶⁵ In reality, no funds came anywhere close to these numbers. But there was much activity evident in the area of protection.

Attention to protection of women has not been accompanied by an equivalent momentum for women's access to public space or participation in peace and security decision-making.

For example, in 2014, the Congolese army launched a distinct plan to combat sexual violence in conflict and commanders later made a formal pledge to combat rape in war.⁶⁶ Also in 2014, President Kabila appointed a special representative to combat sexual violence and the recruitment of child soldiers. Special Representative Jeannine Mabunda Lioko and her office appear to have a much more robust budget, staff, and resources than the Ministry for Women, which is responsible for coordinating the NAP as a whole. This special office of the president—Bureau du Représentant Personnel du Chef de l'Etat en charge de la Lutte contre les Violences Sexuelles et le Recrutement des Enfants—is consolidating statistics from various sources on conflict-related sexual violence and suggests that such violence is decreasing, particularly on the part of the Congolese army.⁶⁷ The office has also initiated a public campaign to “shatter the silence” around rape, which includes a phone number to call for assistance. These activities and more relate directly to two of the NAP's desired outcomes: reducing the rate of sexual violence in conflict zones and increasing public awareness of techniques for combatting sexual violence.⁶⁸ The special representative reports that 70% of her office's activities are funded by the government.⁶⁹

As such, the office is contributing to the goals of the NAP and refers to the NAP in its mandate, but staff also acknowledge

that the office's strategy is separate from the NAP and there appears to be little communication between this office and the Ministry for Women, Family, and Children.⁷⁰ In fact, the special representative's mandate comes directly from the president, and the prime minister granted the office approximately US\$150,000 to launch in the middle of the fiscal year in 2014, according to one staff member at the office.⁷¹ The Ministry for Women, Family, and Children, which coordinates the NAP as well as other gender policy frameworks, does not appear to have the same political clout or fundraising ability.

“*International partners only show up for violence against women, not participation or prevention.*”
— Human Rights Activist

The strong political will in the area of conflict-related sexual violence may be linked to the fact that part of the special representative's stated mission is to change Congo's global reputation as the rape capital of the world.⁷² Indeed, as part of a public relations trip to Washington, DC, the office spent an estimated US\$40,000 on a DC-based lobbying firm.⁷³ This could certainly contribute to involving leaders in the struggle against sexual violence.⁷⁴ But there is also a tension between these public-relations goals and concrete action to address sexual violence. Indeed, some of the office's claims about improvements in justice for victims are questionable.⁷⁵

Whatever the underlying motivation behind this political push, the office has a strong and dedicated team and the political will in this area has enabled actions that could prove meaningful in reducing sexual violence. It is possible that the NAP contributed to this momentum, but it seems more likely that this is a distinct domestic response to the international focus on this particular element of Congo's women, peace, and security situation. UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Zainab Hawa Bangura reportedly played a significant role in getting the office off the ground, alongside international donors who rallied behind it. But UN Women in Congo, which is separate from the Office of the Special Representative and is more directly involved in advancing the NAP, receives insufficient international support for its work in Congo and is severely understaffed.

Inauguration of new police station for protection of women and children. UN photo by Sylvain Liechti.



If the kind of political will that has gone into the development of the Office of the Special Representative could be shown for the NAP—nationally and internationally—this could deliver a double dividend. Since the NAP includes women’s *participation* in addition to their *protection*, a more coherent approach in line with the NAP would arguably have great impact on reducing sexual violence in and beyond the eastern conflict zones while also increasing the chances for peace and security more broadly, as noted above. To date, however, political will, both national and international, has been a crucial missing ingredient for the NAP.

3. COLLABORATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY

The process of creating the NAP was a largely inclusive and collaborative affair. Interviewees reported that this collaboration also had knock-on benefits; for example, helping bring more NGOs into contact with parliamentarians and with the gender and justice ministries in particular. After creating and revising the NAP, some coordination and collaboration between state bodies and civil society continued. For example, the steering committee for implementing the plan includes 10 civil society actors and 30 members from a variety of government ministries and the security sector. In terms of implementation, those working on advancing the NAP’s goals for the police in particular are doing so in partnership with the state body responsible for broader police reform.⁷⁶

However, this appears to be an exception to the norm. The overarching consensus is that levels of collaboration and inclusion have generally deteriorated in the implementation phase. The steering committee, which is responsible for *coordinating* the plan’s implementation, was put on hold multiple times during its creation before finally being established.⁷⁷ Even as of 2016, it is barely active. The ministry and others report that this is due to a lack of funding. Many in civil society suggest that frequent staff changes in the ministry (including changing the minister) and an accompanying lack of capacity have hampered coordination and collaboration, and therefore concrete action to implement the NAP. “The NAP has never been executed. Why?,” one civil society representative asked rhetorically, “Because the state closes doors on it and creates blockages.”

Some respondents argued that it cuts both ways: “In implementation...civil society is often ignored. But government doesn’t shut them out. Civil society drafted everything. The lack of implementation is not only government’s problem, it’s also civil society; they haven’t articulated their projects and demands clearly enough, and there’s a gap in terms of how to reach the government and get their needs met.”

Interviewees reported a particular lack of collaboration between the state actors in the capital Kinshasa and civil society in the provinces. Congo is a vast territory, and the

nature of peace and security concerns vary dramatically across the country. Many suggested that those in Kinshasa do not understand the needs of Congolese women in rural and provincial areas. Indeed, there is a lack of communication in both directions, and as a result some estimate that “[The NAP] is an advocacy tool that is not used or understood by the organizations outside of Kinshasa.” One international actor working in North Kivu complained that “It’s a constant mess of revisions and workshops in Kinshasa...and months later, we’re still asking, where is the implementation? Where is the action?”

Strengthened coordination and communication between the center and the periphery could help localize the NAP in each province, tailoring it to local priorities while increasing a sense of ownership and the possibilities for action. South Kivu has made great strides in this respect, integrating the NAP into its local development plan.⁷⁸ But little action has been taken in other provinces; no others have local committees in place for the NAP.

“*There are two categories of NGOs: those who are close to government and those who aren’t. We’re lacking a neutral leader in civil society.*” - Human Rights Activist

Within civil society itself, the NAP also initially created an opening for increased collaboration. As one civil society representative reported, “The NAP led to us to share more information with each other.” One civil society organization, the Permanent Dialogue Framework for Congolese Women (CAFCO), serves as a platform for cooperation among civil society groups working on this issue. The secretariat for implementing the NAP on the civil society side comprises CAFCO, the Congolese branch of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, and the Center for the Study of Justice and Resolution 1325.

But divisions within civil society have sharpened in the implementation phase of the NAP. Multiple interviewees reported challenges relating to collaboration and information-sharing on the civil society side and the sentiment that power and information have become overly concentrated in a small number of individuals. As one interviewee explained, “Congolese society is hierarchical and so is civil society.” This is playing out in a sense of exclusion in some quarters when it comes to implementing the NAP. All of this is further exacerbated by deepening divisions between pro-government and pro-opposition camps throughout the political sphere in Congo in the wake of the likely delay in elections, increase in unrest and repression, and the accompanying political uncertainty.

Nonetheless, many in civil society are revitalizing efforts for a unified social movement that could advance the equal participation of women in decision-making in Congo. A new movement stemming from North and South Kivu, Rien Sans Les Femmes (Nothing Without Women), echoes a global call for

“nothing about us without us,” and departs from the principle that neither peace nor sustainable development can be achieved in Congo without women. Started by 15 civil society leaders in March 2015, the movement now brings together more than 50 organizations (including many in Kinshasa) and is further supported by 10 international organizations. It has a rotating chair, which facilitates diffuse rather than centralized or personalized leadership, although the drawbacks of this may also include less capacity for decisive or strategic action and a lack of institutional memory. In its first campaign, it succeeded in collecting over 200,000 signatures in North and South Kivu in favor of reinserting language regarding quotas for women in the new electoral law. A movement like this could have huge potential for advancing women, peace, and security if it could unite civil society organizations across the country.

“ I am skeptical that Congo is a country that can be changed from the top down or through laws... The top-down dynamic exhibits a lot of weaknesses, maybe we need to reverse the approach. - Civil Society Representative ”

4. CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND WAYS FORWARD

In any area of policy or social change, there is power in a nationally-owned plan that reflects unique concerns and priorities, and this is particularly true in Congo, where distrust of international frameworks is rife and international actors have frequently contributed to conflict, even when ostensibly trying to build peace. As such, the National Action Plan has significant potential. It articulates national priorities in the area of women, peace, and security in a holistic way that no other policy framework in Congo has achieved. And despite its challenges and many shortcomings, numerous interviewees reported that the NAP remains a useful advocacy tool. This was true for many Congolese interviewees working in state bodies and civil society, as well as international actors working in Congo.

Despite making advances toward some of the objectives of the NAP, state, security, and civil society actors are carrying out many activities that contribute to those objectives without acting under the NAP umbrella or feeding into the coordination structures that were created to ensure holistic implementation. This ultimately makes tackling these interconnected issues more difficult, as it increases the likelihood of duplication and miscommunication and risks undermining efforts toward

some goals. As the work continues, the NAP itself expired in 2015, and it is unclear whether and how it will be renewed or revised. The NAP needs a reinvigorated push from civil society, state actors, international donors, and the UN community in order to start having a greater impact on people’s lives.

The NAP articulates national priorities in the area of women, peace, and security in a holistic way that no other policy framework in Congo has achieved.

The first step is to overcome the NAP’s overarching challenge: insufficient political will. The state’s political push in the area of conflict-related sexual violence shows responsiveness to external and internal pressure. This opens an opportunity for the NAP: if international donors and agencies could team up with interested individuals within the state to build support for the NAP—and particularly its components on women’s participation—this could expand political will in this area. Protecting women from violence is fundamentally an issue of gender equality and cannot be achieved by solely focusing on women as victims. Security for women in Congo needs to be reframed at the international level as a matter of women’s rights and social, economic, and political participation. This has to be articulated clearly via the priorities of the nationally-owned plan, in a more holistic approach to women’s security and peace. Similarly, if national civil society organizations can unite forces in a broad-based social movement to push for more meaningful progress in this area, supported by their international counterparts, the NAP could come to life. Women in civil society overcame their divisions in the lead-up to Sun City; amid gridlock in mainstream politics, they now have an opportunity to do so again.

Technical Committee for Regional Peace and Security meets in Goma. UN Photo by Sylvain Liechti.



Second, energy must be focused on three critical branches of the NAP: Peace, Women’s Rights, and Political Participation. For women to influence peace in Congo, they need to influence politics, and this is acknowledged in the NAP. Indeed, a critical mass of women in government could also influence political will for the NAP and all of its goals from the inside. Although the current political uncertainty in Congo in some ways increases the risks for women seeking to enter politics, in other ways it creates an opening for all those looking to advance gender equality and peace in the country: national and international organizations could use this opportunity to provide more and better support to women who are looking to enter politics. If the elections are delayed, the extra time should be used to better prepare female candidates, help them access the resources that they need, build their constituency bases, and connect them to key provincial and national stakeholders. Of course, all work in this area will need to be carried out with particular sensitivity to managing the increased risks for women entering the political sphere.

Third, in addition to supporting female electoral candidates, these three branches of the NAP outline a number of objectives for achieving a legal basis for political parity, developing a legal arsenal for gender equality more broadly, and ensuring that discriminatory provisions are removed from the Family Code. Many people inside and outside of state structures have been working tirelessly to address the new obstacles posed by the 2015 electoral and parity laws, in which constitutional guarantees of parity in all public institutions were essentially overridden. Creative efforts to re-establish a basis for parity should continue to be a priority, whether legal or political—for example, by getting political parties to adopt their own regulations guaranteeing at least 30% female representation in parties along with meaningful positions for women on electoral lists. This work would benefit significantly from a more united push that brings civil society organizations together and uses media and advocacy campaigns to make this a national issue for the public at large, and an issue that cannot be ignored.

The NAP urgently needs revision and updating, as well as full financing, so that it can truly be a high-impact plan for the nation as a whole.

The other piece of legislation now under revision—the Family Code—could have a multiplier effect on peace and gender equality. Inequity in family law is a strong determinant of societal instability: cross-national data shows that countries with highly inequitable family laws are the least peaceful and most fragile. Male champions within the parliament and senate should step up to ensure that the code’s revision is not whitewashed. Congolese organizations could also articulate widely the link between the Family Code and peace and security to emphasize that this issue should be important to everyone, not just women. International actors could support this effort by underlining this link when engaging with Congolese authorities in the area of peace and security.

Fourth, there is a need to further strengthen coordination among the various actors working on sexual and gender-based violence in conflict. This includes international, national, and nongovernmental organizations who are tackling this vital work in silos and who may be duplicating efforts rather than drawing synergies. A revived NAP could help to focus these efforts and more clearly delineate roles and responsibilities, with the Office of the President’s Special Representative continuing to lead. The United Nations could support greater coordination within its agencies and between it and the government by appointing a Senior Gender Adviser to the Office of the Secretary-General’s Special Representative in Congo, as recommended in both the high-level review of UN peace operations and the global study on the implementation of Resolution 1325. All of this could also contribute to a more holistic approach that begins to address the root causes of this violence (including “militarized masculinities” that exploit and exaggerate extreme interpretations of gender identities), thus better tackling the roles armed actors, demobilized militias, and regular citizens play in perpetrating and preventing it.

Finally, as all of these activities continue, the NAP urgently needs revision and updating, as well as full financing, so that it can truly be a high-impact plan for the nation as a whole. Many interviewees who were familiar with the NAP complained that it was poorly written, lacked coherence, and that the basis for the budget was unclear. A revision could refine its focus, clarify roles and responsibilities, and create a results-based monitoring and evaluation system that would support accountability.

“ *A large number of women in power can lead to a different kind of governance, with citizenship and peace at the center.*

- Civil Society Representative

Perhaps more importantly, the process of revising the NAP could itself be used to support coalition-building within civil society and more robust bridge-building between civil society and champions of gender equality and peace within state structures. This in turn would build new momentum and strengthen the prospects for strong and sustained political will, a coordinated structure for implementation, and allocation of resources to ensure action—significant elements of a high-impact NAP. The process would also serve as a key opportunity to strengthen the ministry responsible for the NAP and attract international support. Interviewees reported that such a process should start from the grassroots as well as the elites, exploring the weaknesses and strengths of the current NAP based on experiences until now. Could the NAP’s localization in South Kivu serve as a model for elsewhere? How can the NAP be better integrated with the regional Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and regional frameworks for women, peace, and security? Could a revised NAP begin to address the violent “masculinities” that have driven so much of the harm against women? Five years after the creation of Africa’s sixth NAP, this process could provide an opportunity to reflect, learn, and invigorate action.

NOTES

1. Another two million are estimated to have died in the four years that followed. See Benjamin Coghlan, et al., "Mortality in the Democratic Republic of Congo: An Ongoing Crisis," New York: International Rescue Committee, 2006, <https://www.rescue.org/report/mortality-democratic-republic-congo-ongoing-crisis>. Estimates on the number of fatalities in the Congolese conflict vary, and some have argued that the commonly used estimate of five million may use too broad an interpretation of conflict-related fatalities.
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11. Mireia Cano Vinas, "Gender Audit of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Region," International Alert and the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, October 2015.
12. Ibid. See also UN Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region," United Nations, March 9, 2016, UN Doc. S/2016/232.
13. Human Rights Watch, "ICC: Congolese Warlord to Go to Trial," June 9, 2014, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/06/09/icc-congolese-warlord-go-trial>.
14. Annie Matundu Mbambi and Marie-Claire Faray-Kele, "Gender Inequality and Social Institutions in the D.R. Congo" (Peace-Women [WILPF], December 2010), http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Resources/NGO/hrinst_genderinequalityinthe-drc_wilpf_december2010english.pdf; Wolfe, "Congo's Soccer Players Get Cars. Its Rape Victims Get Nothing."
15. BBC News, "Violence Erupts at Congo Protests," January 22, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30915162>.
16. Michelle Barsa, Olivia Holt-Ivry, and Allison Muehlenbeck, "Inclusive Ceasefires: Women, Gender, and a Sustainable End to Violence," The Institute for Inclusive Security, March 2016.
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43. Coalition for the International Criminal Court, "Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa)," accessed May 18, 2016, <http://www.iccnw.org/?mod=country&iduct=46>.
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45. International Alert, "What Next for UNSCR 1325 in DRC? Challenges and Opportunities on Women, Peace and Security," *International Alert News*, June 16, 2015, <http://www.international-alert.org/news/what-next-unscr-1325-drc#sthash.Kblh3bem.dpbs>.

46. However, the revised version is not widely available, and as a result there appeared to be some confusion among interviewees as to whether the 2013 NAP was an improvement on the 2010 version. You can now find it here (including its logframe): https://actionplans.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/DRC_NAP_2013-1.pdf. Citation: Democratic Republic of Congo, Ministry of Gender, Family, and Children, “Plan d’Action du Gouvernement de la République Démocratique du Congo pour l’application de la Résolution 1325 du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies,” March 2013,
47. Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, “Women Count: Security Council Resolution 1325—Civil Society Monitoring Report 2014,” p. 12.
48. United Nations Peacekeeping, “Gender Office: Mandates and Objectives,” MONUSCO, 2016, <https://monusco.unmissions.org/en/gender-office-mandates-and-objectives>.
49. The minister for women, family, and children suggested in an interview that the plan was designed to last until 2015, but this is not written into the document and there does not seem to be consensus on this timeframe among the various stakeholders. On the contrary, many suggested that there was no fixed timeframe, as did the governmental report listed in the next endnote.
50. Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo and UN Women, “Rapport Bilan: 15 Ans de la Résolution 1325 en République Démocratique du Congo,” October 2015.
51. Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, “Women Count: Security Council Resolution 1325—Civil Society Monitoring Report 2014.”
52. It’s unclear how the activities in the log frame were budgeted.
53. Many interviewees reported the ministry’s lack of capacity and donors’ unwillingness to fund it as a result. A 2013 European Union analysis of the ministry found it lacked capacity to implement its mandate. Laura Davis, Paola Fabbri, and Ilot Muthaka Alphonse, “Democratic Republic of Congo: Gender Country Profile,” commissioned by the Swedish Embassy in collaboration with DFID, the European Union Delegation, and the Embassy of Canada, Kinshasa: 2014, p. 12, citing Delegation of the European Union, “Appui au Ministère du Genre, de la Famille et de l’Enfant en RDC. Etude d’analyse organisationnelle et institutionnelle,” Contrat no 2012/301648 Rapport Final, avril 2013.
54. Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, “Women Count: Security Council Resolution 1325—Civil Society Monitoring Report 2014.”
55. Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo and UN Women, “Rapport Bilan: 15 Ans de la Résolution 1325 en République Démocratique du Congo,” October 2015, author’s translation.
56. Ibid. The survey was conducted in September 2015 but details of the sample size and selection method are not included in the report.
57. One possible exception was the 2013 national dialogue, which saw a 12% participation rate for women—about the same as that of Sun City.
58. See, for example, Human Rights Watch, “DR Congo: Crackdown on Presidential Aspirant,” May 9, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/05/09/dr-congo-crackdown-presidential-aspirant>; Human Rights Watch, “DR Congo: Free Youth Activists,” March 15, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/03/15/dr-congo-free-youth-activists>.
59. Interview with a parliamentarian, in Kinshasa, February 11, 2016.
60. These are just some of the activities that individuals interviewed for this report were engaged in.
61. See O’Reilly, “Why Women?,” p. 4.
62. Interview with Gen. Michel Elesse, Secretary-General of the Monitoring Committee for the Reform of the Police. The 6% estimate is from the Congolese NAP, 2013, p. 24.
63. Interview with Gen. Michel Elesse, Secretary-General of the Monitoring Committee for the Reform of the Police, Kinshasa, February 11, 2016.
64. Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo and UN Women, “Rapport Bilan: 15 Ans de la Résolution 1325 en République Démocratique du Congo,” October 2015. See also O’Byran, “The Case for Equality of Opportunity: Recruitment and Retention of Women in the Congolese Military.”
65. Democratic Republic of Congo, Ministry of Gender, Family, and Children, “Plan d’Action du Gouvernement de la République Démocratique du Congo pour l’application de la Résolution 1325 du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies,” March 2013, Logframe/Annex. See https://actionplans.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/DRC_NAP_2013-1.pdf.
66. United Nations, “DR Congo: UN Welcomes ‘Milestone’ Declaration Aimed at Combating Rape in War,” *UN News Centre*, March 31, 2015, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50469#.VzT9YoQrKUK>.
67. Interview with two staff members at the Office of the Special Representative to Combat Sexual Violence and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers, Kinshasa, February 12, 2016.
68. Democratic Republic of Congo, Ministry of Gender, Family, and Children, “Plan d’Action du Gouvernement de la République Démocratique du Congo pour l’application de la Résolution 1325 du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies,” March 2013, Logframe/Annex, p. 5. See https://actionplans.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/DRC_NAP_2013-1.pdf.
69. Jeanine Mabunda, cited in “Combatting Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment in the DRC,” Chatham House Africa Programme Meeting Summary, March 2016, p. 4.
70. Interview with Office of the Special Representative, Kinshasa, February 12, 2016, op. cit.; Interviews with civil society actors and international donors, Kinshasa and Goma, February 2012.
71. Interview with Office of the Special Representative, op. cit.
72. Interview with Office of the Special Representative. See also Kathleen Kuehnast, “Unlearning Violence: Democratic Republic of Congo,” United States Institute of Peace, July 27, 2015, <http://www.usip.org/olivebranch/2015/07/27/violence-democratic-republic-of-the-congo>.
73. Interview with Office of the Special Representative. See also Wolfe, “Congo’s Soccer Players Get Cars. Its Rape Victims Get Nothing.”; Jason Stearns, “Congolese Leaders Vie for Influence in Washington through Lobbyists,” *Congo Siasa*, August 20, 2015, <http://congosiasa.blogspot.com/2015/08/congolese-leaders-vie-for-influence-in.html>.

74. Democratic Republic of Congo, Ministry of Gender, Family, and Children, “Plan d’Action du Gouvernement de la République Démocratique du Congo pour l’application de la Résolution 1325 du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies,” March 2013, Logframe/Annex, p. 6. See https://actionplans.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/DRC_NAP_2013-1.pdf.
75. For example, in the hard-copy brochure about its work, the office claims that 30 women received reparation for the crimes committed in Songomboyo in Equateur province, but others dispute this, saying not a single victim of rape in Congo has received damages, including in this particular case. See Wolfe, “Congo’s Soccer Players Get Cars. Its Rape Victims Get Nothing.”
76. Staff members from the civil society organization Center for the Study of Justice and Resolution 1325 sit on the Monitoring Committee for the Reform of the Police and have conducted numerous joint trainings of police officers.
77. See, for example, Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, “Women Count: Security Council Resolution 1325—Civil Society Monitoring Report 2014,” p. 12.
78. Multiple interviewees referred to this as a significant step forward. Due to time limitations, the authors were unable to visit South Kivu and explore this new development. In August 2015 the then-Ministry for Gender, Family, and Children published a guide for integrating resolutions 1325 and 1820 (including elements relating to the NAP) into local development plans, “Guide Pratique pour l’Intégration des Résolutions 1325 et 1820 du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies dans les Plans de Développement Local en RDC,” with the support of the United Kingdom, the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, International Civil Society Action Network, and CAFCO. This idea has a lot of potential and deserves further research.
79. Interview with International Alert, which has partnered with the Swedish government to support the campaign, Goma, February 22, 2016. Data also taken from a hard-copy flyer about the campaign. See also Annika Ben David and Maria Lange, “Increasing the Political Representation of Women in DRC,” *International Alert News*, May 18, 2015, <http://www.international-alert.org/news/rien-sans-les-femmes#sthash.vzOwJQuE.dpbs>.
80. See, for example, Severine Autesserre, *Peaceland* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
81. Outcomes relating to women’s political participation can be found in both the Peace and the Political Participation areas of the NAP’s log frame.
82. Democratic Republic of Congo, Ministry of Gender, Family, and Children, “Plan d’Action du Gouvernement de la République Démocratique du Congo pour l’application de la Résolution 1325 du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies,” March 2013, Logframe/Annex, p. 3 and 9–11. See https://actionplans.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/DRC_NAP_2013-1.pdf.
83. The Senate passed the 2015 electoral law after essentially nullifying the provision relating to parity for female election candidates, despite constitutional guarantees. The new law also requires local and provincial election candidates to have a high-school diploma and forces candidates to pay a registration fee. After the all-male constitutional court struck the initial parity bill down, ruling that 30% quotas in the law were unconstitutional (the Constitution guarantees parity in all public institutions), a watered-down version was passed as the parity law in 2015.
84. Valerie M. Hudson, Donna Lee Bowen, and Perpetua Lynne Nielsen, “We Are Not Helpless: Addressing Structural Gender Inequality in Post-Conflict Societies,” *PRISM* 6, No. 1 (March 2016).
85. United Nations, “Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on Uniting our Strengths for Peace: Politics, Partnership and People,” June 17, p. 2–15, UN Doc. A/70/95–S/2015/446, para. 259; Coomaraswamy et al., “Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace,” p. 396.
86. On militarized masculinities, see for example Amina Mama, “Challenging Militarized Masculinities,” *Open Democracy*, May 29, 2013, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/amina-mama/challenging-militarized-masculinities>.

THE PHILIPPINES

Alexandra Amling, Brittany Persinger, Kelsey Coolidge

The Philippines' National Action Plan (NAP) draws on a foundation of robust national legislation on gender equality and has been accompanied by women's increasing participation in peace processes in the country. The plan has helped to shift attitudes toward women's roles in peace and security in the government and the army, and has increased coordination between the army and civil society. The NAP's successes can in part be attributed to strong political will in government for advancing gender equality, the identification and allocation of financial resources for implementing the plan through national and local government budgeting processes, and widespread monitoring of the plan among civil society organizations. However, the implementation of the NAP has also fallen short in many areas. In addition to relatively weak coordination, there is a perceived disconnect between what is thought of as a plan designed in the country's capital and the realities on the ground in conflict-affected Mindanao. Though the plan's design was inclusive, its implementation is perceived as being less so. Civil society organizations in conflict-affected areas have expressed skepticism regarding the effectiveness of implementation, in part due to a lack of consultation. Nonetheless, the Philippines has shown flexibility and innovation in advancing the broader goals of gender equality and women's empowerment through local Gender and Development plans that offer greater contextual specificity at provincial levels. These offer an opportunity to address some of the shortcomings of the national plan and strengthen its implementation across the country.

1. WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY IN THE PHILIPPINES

“Peace is more elusive to women who belong to more marginalized sectors [of society].

- Political Party Representative

Since the late 1960s, two distinct subnational conflicts have afflicted the Philippines—one between the government and armed groups seeking to create a communist state, and another between the government and Muslim separatist groups seeking self-determination on the southern island of Mindanao. Over the past decade and a half, women have built on a foundation of informal peacemaking roles in civil society to gain seats in high-level peace processes for both conflicts. Women's access and influence have increased dramatically since 2010, notably in the negotiations with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which culminated in a comprehensive peace agreement in 2014. As efforts to ensure the agreement's implementation continue, women in Mindanao—where gender equality indicators are much lower than the national average—also continue to need support amid ongoing violence and displacement.

Conflict Analysis

Although the Philippines faces multiple security threats ranging from clan-based conflicts to organized crime and communist insurgents, this case study focuses primarily on conflict in Mindanao. (The authors carried out field research in Mindanao and in Manila, the Philippine capital, in August and September of 2015.) Conflict in Mindanao ranges from feuds between clans and violence linked to the illicit arms and drugs trades to clashes between an array of armed groups and between these groups and government forces.¹ Since 1971 these conflicts have caused between 100,000 and 150,000 deaths in Mindanao.² Since 1979, more than two million people have been displaced by conflict. In the past six years, significant progress has been made in peace negotiations between the government and the Philippines' largest rebel group, the MILF, but the peace remains fragile as legislation that would formalize autonomy for the Moro people has yet to be passed in parliament.³

Nature of the Conflict

Centuries of Spanish colonial subjugation, unresolved ethno-religious tensions, and socio-economic marginalization have shaped the current conflicts in the Philippines. In Mindanao, a struggle for more autonomy has led to violent conflict between the indigenous Moro people and the Philippine government. Distrust and tension date back to the massive influx of non-Muslim (predominantly Christian) settlers from the north following Philippine independence from the United States in 1946. Annexation of land through state-sponsored resettlement policies under Ferdinand Marcos' regime (1965–1986) and the suppression of their culture and identity are major grievances of the Moro. Perceived corruption within



the armed forces,⁴ weakly implemented reforms, and growing crime rates have disenfranchised large parts of society in Mindanao.

Spearheaded by the Moro National Liberation Front since 1968, demands for independence shifted to demands for autonomy in the early 1970s, which eventually led to a split within the movement and the formation of the MILF in the early 1980s, along with other, smaller non-state armed groups.⁵

Over the same timeframe, a distinct communist insurgency in the Philippines became the longest-running communist insurgency in Asia.⁶ In the late 1960s, the Communist Party of the Philippines created its own military branch, the New People's Army (CPP-NPA), and began a violent campaign to create a communist state. Driven in part by grievances relating to poverty, inequality, and American "imperial" influence, the conflict reached its peak during Philippine president Ferdinand Marcos's regime, when he imposed martial law (from 1972–1981) as a direct reaction to growing hostility toward his corrupt and repressive government. The strength of the CPP-NPA has since dwindled.⁷ Today, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines is the umbrella organization of several leftist organizations, including the CPP-NPA and the Moro Resistance and Liberation Organization, and is the primary negotiating body in talks with the Philippine national government.⁸

Within this environment of prolonged insecurity, women in the Philippines have found themselves on both sides of the conflict; women and girls constitute the majority of all conflict-related internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Philippines.⁹ On the other hand, many women in Mindanao have also engaged as conflict mediators in their respective communities, and some have either directly or indirectly engaged with non-state armed groups as active combatants, although numbers are difficult to assess.

“ [B]efore the physical outbreak of hostilities, when the men leading the communities sense that discussions are going nowhere and the next move is toward hostilities, men ask the women to go to the other side and talk with them, to help try and resolve the conflict. This is not covered or recorded by cameras. - Civil Society Representative ”

Peace Process

The 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) between the government and the MILF built upon the 2012 Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro, a preliminary peace agreement with the MILF that originally called for replacing, by law, the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) with a new autonomous Bangsamoro entity. This Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) was introduced to operationalize agreements set forth in the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB).



Filipino Muslims cheer following 2014 signing of peace treaty. Photo by Dondi Tawatao/Getty Images

Following the January 2015 “Mamasapano clash” between special police forces and the MILF in Mindanao, which resulted in 67 deaths, public opinion turned against the BBL and stalled the passage of the law in Congress. After the new Philippine president, Rodrigo Duterte, came to power in mid-2016, talks between the government and the MILF to fully implement the CAB resumed and implementing panels were launched.¹⁰ Presidential Peace Adviser Jesus Dureza indicated that a “new version” of the BBL could be drafted as part of this process.¹¹

In the separate peace process between the government and the communists, peace negotiations between the CPP-NPA and the government began as early as 1987 but have stalled since 2013.¹² A new opening emerged when talks resumed in August 2016 following the election of President Duterte.

Post-conflict Justice and Reconciliation

While there were initial fears regarding a resurgence in violence following the BBL's failure to pass, community-based peacebuilding initiatives,¹³ such as “zones of peace,” have been operating in Mindanao since decades before the BBL existed. These zones of peace were established through the collaboration of non-state armed groups and inter-faith communities not only in Mindanao but in different areas of the island to develop violence- and arms-free spaces. Women's involvement¹⁴ and the overall success of these zones have differed depending on size, location, and organization of the zones.^{15, 16} However, with the general trend of conflicts in the Philippines having shaped and shifted male-to-female power dynamics and relationships, the transformative impact of peace zone interventions on perceptions and attitudes has been proven to be more sustainable than peace processes at the national level.^{17, 18}



Community rebuilding also took form in the creation of a Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) as part of the 2012 framework agreement's Annex on Normalization. Launched in 2014, the TJRC was mandated to conduct a two-year study to record grievances experienced by conflict-affected communities in Mindanao and offer recommendations for addressing human rights violations.¹⁹ In addition to research and policymaker interviews, TJRC consultations have involved comprehensive "Listening Process" meetings in 211 local communities across Mindanao. According to the TJRC's final report released in March 2016, women comprised approximately 40% of Listening Process participants.²⁰

Women's Participation in Peace and Security

Commitment to women's involvement in national peace processes was demonstrated by the appointment of Teresita Quintos Deles in 2003 as head of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), which oversees and coordinates the implementation of the 1993 comprehensive peace process regarding all armed insurgencies.²¹ Women's involvement in Track-One negotiations was further promoted by President Benigno Aquino III, who appointed Professor Miriam Coronel-Ferrer to the government's Negotiating Panel to the MILF in 2010.²²

Despite former president Aquino's Letter of Instruction calling for the MILF peace process to be inclusive and transparent, MILF negotiating panels were comprised entirely of men until 2012.²³ To this end, the 2012 Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro declared women's right to "meaningful political participation, and protection from all forms of violence" and established transitional mechanisms (e.g., the Transition Commission, which was tasked with drafting the BBL) in an effort to increase inclusivity and transparency.²⁴ Women contributed significantly to reaching the 2014 CAB, comprising 25% of signatories and 50% of government negotiators overall—including Professor Coronel-Ferrer, the first female chief negotiator to ever sign a Track-One peace agreement. Women continue to play key roles in connecting the high-level process with civil society, broadening public participation, and securing multiple provisions in the agreement relating to women's political participation and protection in any future Bangsamoro autonomous entity.²⁵ The newly-launched government Implementing Panel for the Peace Process in negotiations with the MILF is also chaired by a woman (women's rights champion Irene Santiago).²⁶

In spite of initial resistance and so-called "gender banter"²⁷ regarding women's inclusion in the peace process for Mindanao, their "meaningful" contribution became a key component as the process advanced, particularly after 2011.²⁸ While there was considerable pressure from the international community and the Philippine public to make the peace process more inclusive, a sensitive approach had to be taken in order to clarify that "equality is not about sameness." By stating that the "mutual respect that is desired between the majority and the minority population [in Mindanao] is desirable as well between men and women," the peace agreement eventually became more gender-sensitive.²⁹

Women's organizations also played a substantial role in conflict mitigation and transformation in Mindanao. Their engagement in social service provision³⁰ and the engaging of stakeholders in fragile environments has increased community harmony and bridged divides between various clans. For example, the Mindanao People's Caucus was formed in 2001 and established a civilian ceasefire monitoring presence after a long series of negotiations and relationship-building with security forces. At that time, the rate of reported ceasefire violations was approximately 700 a year, with little enforcement on the ground. By demanding full compliance and implementation of the ceasefire agreement, the caucus's participating organizations likely contributed to the gradual decrease of reported violations over the years to nearly zero today.

Another example of women's grassroots engagement is Noorus Salam, a network composed of female Muslim religious leaders and civil society groups working in predominately Muslim areas in Mindanao. Much of their work focuses on countering violent beliefs through education and political participation but also advocacy efforts to change the attitude held among some people that "somehow Islam and democracy are not compatible."³¹

Shifts in male-to-female power dynamics in conflict and post-conflict settings often work against women and girls.

The TJRC report documented findings related to the "pronounced gender dimension" of the experiences of the Bangsamoro people during the conflict. While conflict often changes roles and relationships, the gendered impact of this conflict is particularly visible in the situation of women in camps for internally displaced persons.³² When fighting starts, women seek safety in the camps, and in certain settings have become intermediaries between their IDP communities and donors or relief organizations.³³ As women take on roles and responsibilities traditionally held by men, the traditional foundations of male identities have been perceived as being eroded,³⁴ leading to an increased likelihood of domestic violence and insecurity for women in IDP camps.³⁵ The lack of adequate housing, bathing facilities, and security mechanisms at these camps also render women and girls particularly vulnerable to human trafficking, prostitution, sexual harassment, and

assault.^{36,37} High poverty levels have impacted the traditional provider and “hero” roles to which men felt bound. Women have also been actively engaged in camp management and aid distribution due to men’s being confined to camps and houses for fear of conscription or arrest for alleged membership in an armed group,³⁸ or men’s increased absence due to the search for work elsewhere. In connection with the cost of war in Mindanao—crumbling infrastructure, decreased economic activity, and impeded access to necessary services—which has impoverished the entire region and continues to undermine economic development, women and women’s groups occupy a space in which they are simultaneously victimized and empowered.

The different roles women play in the Philippines also demonstrate a geographical divide between the “center” (Manila) and the “periphery” (Mindanao) when analyzing women’s diverse roles in conflict prevention, mediation, and reconstruction. Women in Manila have championed increased national-level participation and involvement in Track-One negotiations. Women in Mindanao—where the immediate impact of war is more tangible—have contributed to conflict management and the establishment of early warning systems; structural issues, however, continue to hamper their ability to become involved in decision-making positions. The involvement of Mindanao women underscores dynamic ways they are involved in conflict and post-conflict areas, especially ways that are traditionally unrecognized. Women’s empowerment and roles as active agents of change remain limited, however, unless attitudes change and their participation is genuinely recognized and valued. In that sense, shifts in male-to-female power dynamics in conflict and post-conflict settings often

Professor Miriam Colonel Ferrer signs peace treaty between Philippine Government and MILF. Photo by Presidential Photo Division via Getty Images.



work against women and girls. Compounded by structural issues throughout Mindanao such as poverty, lack of capacity, and polarized relationships—often family disputes rather than ethno-religious divides—women continue to face problems with contributing to peacebuilding.³⁹

“Leadership training is necessary for women to manage conflict. If we complain that we are not being involved in the peace process, how prepared are we?”

- Civil Society Representative

Gender Dynamics

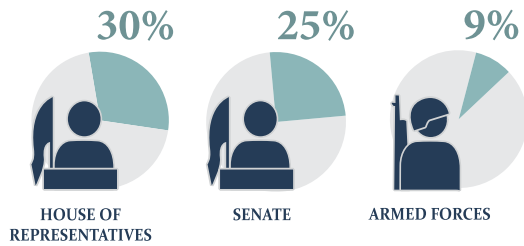
The Philippines is a regional leader in gender equality and women’s rights. The country ranks 7th out of 145 countries in the World Economic Forum’s 2015 Global Gender Gap Report, and was the only Southeast Asian country in the report’s top 10 best performers in 2014. By comparison, other countries in the region scored in the 80s (e.g., Vietnam, Sri Lanka) and 100s (Cambodia).⁴⁰ The high Global Gender Gap score is attributed to the Philippines’ high performance in the education and health sectors. However, it glosses over existing structural impediments to women’s political and economic empowerment, as well as their low standing in the security sector, where they make up just 9% of the armed forces. The UN Development Programme’s Gender Inequality Index, indicating the percentage of potential human development lost due to gender inequality with a high rank meaning loss of human development due to gender inequality, ranks the country only 89th for gender equality out of 188.⁴¹

Since the Philippines achieved independence in 1898, two women have held the presidency: the late Corazon Aquino became Asia’s first female president when she was elected in 1986, and Gloria Macapagal Arroyo served from 2001–2010. As of May 2016, women comprise 30% of the Philippine House of Representatives and 25% of the Senate.⁴² The number of women involved in formal and informal peace process tracks on both sides of the political and ideological spectrum has increased over time.^{43,44} In terms of political participation, women are very visible at both the national and local levels of governance structure.

Women in Mindanao do not always feel the impact of these achievements in gender equality at the national level, but in some ways they have made significant advances in community leadership. Women play significant roles in managing conflict at the local and provincial levels. Amid high levels of clan-based violence, for example, women are often accepted as mediators between clans because they have greater mobility during conflict and are less likely to be targeted for revenge killings.⁴⁵ Women in Mindanao have also negotiated with

“It’s one thing to have a plan and another thing to have a sense of ownership of that plan so that women will actually use it.” - Civil Society Representative

PROPORTION OF WOMEN



In terms of political participation, women are very visible at both the national and local levels of governance structure.

armed groups and the Philippine army to reduce violence in their communities.⁴⁶ In addition, their active engagement in negotiating with rebel groups has helped to gather important information but also to broker ceasefires, as well as settle disputes in communities. At the sub-national and grassroots level, women's negotiator and service provider roles are recognized as being a major contribution to conflict mediation and transformation⁴⁷ and to sustaining economic activity.⁴⁸

Yet, despite achievements that have catapulted the Philippines to being a regional role model for the empowerment of women, the majority of women in Mindanao still continue to live in makeshift accommodations and temporary shelters, and low education levels among women and girls constrain their ability to seek better employment and forge social networks.^{49, 50} A fragile peace compounded by a lack of infrastructure and the recurrence of natural disasters has major socio-economic and psychological⁵¹ implications for women and girls in Mindanao. As this is coupled with the patronizing attitudes of some in the north toward people from Mindanao,⁵² many young women opt to leave the region entirely⁵³ or to work overseas, seeing it as the only feasible option for generating income to support their families.⁵⁴

Existing Legal Framework

The 1987 Philippine Constitution affirms the equality between men and women before the law.⁵⁵ The Philippines was also the first member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW) in 1981. Subsequent national legislation has proven the Philippines's commitment to implementing the women, peace, and security agenda.

“When we speak about the NAP, we say we're implementing the Magna Carta.

- Government Representative

The most significant piece of gender legislation in the Philippines is the Magna Carta for Women (hereinafter Magna Carta). Passed in 2009, the Magna Carta is a comprehensive women's rights law that aligns itself with CEDAW and covers nearly every aspect of women's participation in social, political, and economic affairs. It also centralizes many gender-specific laws in the Philippines into a single legal framework. Many interviewees from state agencies and civil society referred to the Magna Carta as a “national CEDAW” or “CEDAW ++.”

The most influential aspect of the Magna Carta is the mandate requiring all national and local government bodies to allocate 5% of their total annual budgets to gender and development-related projects, activities, and programs. The Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) reviews and endorses all gender and development (GAD) plans and budgets. Non-compliant offices have to return misused funds. GAD budgeting incorporates all social, political, and economic projects, and is not necessarily focused only on women and conflict. Thus, for conflict-affected areas, additional funds are made available through the PAMANA (“Peaceful and Resilient Communities”) framework, and local government units (LGUs) in 45 out of the country's 82 conflict-affected provinces were named “peaceful and resilient” by the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

2. THE PHILIPPINES' NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY

The Philippine National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security for 2010–2016, the first such plan in Southeast Asia, is supported by this comprehensive legal framework championing women's rights. The NAP is focused on including women at decision-making levels and addressing sexual violence in conflict, being rooted in three of the seven UN resolutions of the women, peace, and security (WPS) framework: UN Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, and 1888.⁵⁶

The Philippine NAP is not a stand-alone document; it is considered to “support the implementation of national mandates on women and gender equality as well as peace and development. It is a product of constructive engagement between the government and civil society.”⁵⁷ The NAP includes a detailed history of WPS initiatives in the Philippines, and outlines four priority areas: protection and prevention; empowerment and participation; promotion and mainstreaming throughout conflict peacebuilding and conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms (including national, regional, and local development plans); and capacity-development, monitoring, and reporting. The OPAPP and PCW jointly lead a Localization of the National Action Plan program in conjunction with local and regional counterparts in 48 conflict-affected areas covered by the PAMANA framework.

“If the president wakes up and decides not to want an OPAPP, he can make an executive order and we won't exist anymore... If OPAPP is dismantled, the NAP will sleep.

- Government Representative

| THE PHILIPPINES NATIONAL ACTION PLAN | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 2010-2016 | |
| HOSTED BY: | The Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process |
| BUDGET ESTIMATE: | NAP steering committee was given 5 million Philippine pesos (~ US \$108,343) from the President’s Contingency Fund for its first year. |
| FOCAL AREAS: | Protection and prevention Empowerment and participation Promotion and mainstreaming Capacity development and monitoring and reporting |

The NAP emphasizes the differential impact conflict has on women and men and has specific language on the regulation of small arms and light weapons (SALW). In fact, the Philippines is one of only four countries that have NAPs in place currently which have specific stipulations addressing “the need for small arms regulation itself to be gender-responsive.”⁵⁸ The Comprehensive Firearms and Ammunition Regulation Act was passed in 2013, although it does not allude to the NAP and does not reference any link between conflict and possession of SALW.⁵⁹

By addressing the issue of proliferation of SALW in the Philippines, the NAP also mentions the root causes of conflict in the Philippines, although the results framework does not incorporate it in its matrix. The failure to address the grievances of affected populations is considered by some to be one problem that undermines ownership of the NAP for local communities.

Development and Implementation of the National Action Plan

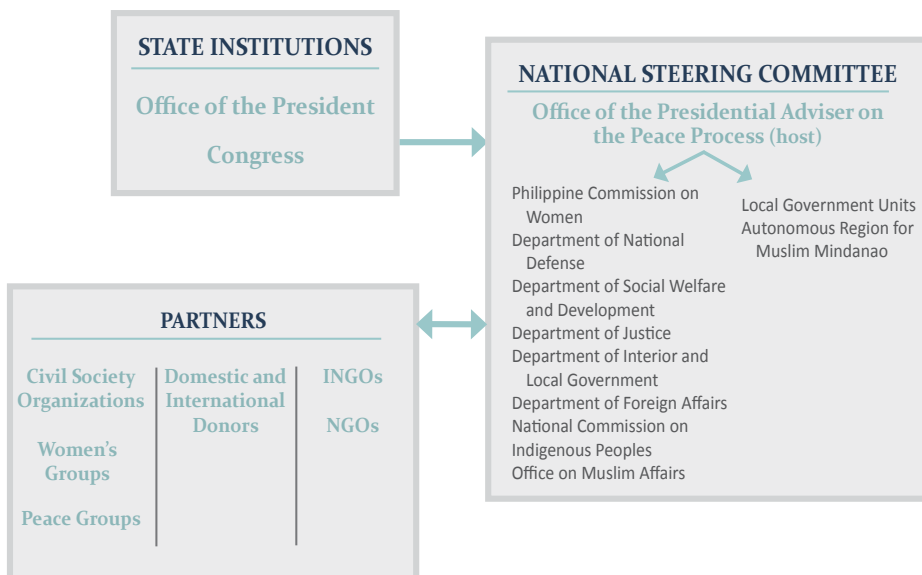
The story of the NAP began in 2007, when women from civil society and academia approached the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (now the Philippine Commission on Women, or PCW) and OPAPP for help developing a NAP. To ensure an **inclusive design process**, a NAP Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) was developed in 2008 in conjunction with other Philippine networks (e.g., International Women’s Tribune Centre, SULONG Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and

International Humanitarian Law, etc.) to collectively identify strategies for implementing United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and to form the basis of a comprehensive, inclusive national action plan. This PrepCom, in partnership with regional civil society organizations, facilitated regional consultations with key stakeholders and two validation workshops in 2009. The plan was ultimately finalized in 2010.

Following the NAP’s launch, then-president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo established a National Steering Committee on Women, Peace and Security (NSCWPS) by Executive Order 865 in 2010 as a **coordination body** charged with implementing and mainstreaming the NAP at all levels of government. The steering committee is co-chaired by PCW and OPAPP, and is comprised solely by government entities. It was initially allocated 5 million pesos (approximately US\$108,000) from the President’s Contingency Fund for its first year, and then was financed directly by OPAPP. It is worth noting (as was pointed out to researchers) that since both OPAPP and the steering committee were established by executive order, any future president could hypothetically “get rid” of the NAP should he or she choose.

These developments raise the question of the **political will and commitment** to implement Resolution 1325 and gender equality in the Philippines. Broadly speaking, political will for supporting women’s rights and empowerment is strong at the national level as evident in the huge body of national legislation and the creation of the NSCWPS as an executive order. However, considering that the NAP is situated within

Stakeholders Involved in NAP Implementation*



*Interpretation of how NAP was designed for monitoring implementation.

the framework of the Magna Carta, there seems to be a lack of understanding in the higher echelons of power regarding women's contributions to peace and security. In other words, the strong focus on gender equality more broadly in the Magna Carta obscures the other aspects of the NAP and the WPS agenda.

The gap between legislation and implementation has thus become the bone of contention for many civil society representatives in Mindanao who demand political will to go beyond launching laws and policies. It is important to note, however, that the Magna Carta is a law and has reportedly received much more attention and is more widely applied than the NAP. In addition, some interviewees from both the security sector and women's groups suggested that laws and policies alone will not change much if women do not receive adequate capacity-building to take up the roles envisioned for them in the Magna Carta and the NAP. Also, there appears to be a very low level of awareness of the NAP in the population at large, particularly in conflict-affected areas. Engagement with the local communities has remained limited. Commitment is thus narrowed down to where the "government has a tendency to preach to the converted," as one civil society representative suggested.

In consideration of the security situation in Mindanao, engagement by the army is important for effective application of the NAP to that specific context as well as to mainstream gender equality issues and women's participation in the army's ranks and its work. GAD stipulations in the Magna Carta and the establishment of a GAD Office with the Philippine army in 2014 have led to a considerable change in attitude within the Philippine Armed Forces as a whole, according to interviewed army personnel. However, the army does not use its GAD budget only for the implementation of targeted NAP activities that reflect directly the objectives of the plan, but rather to streamline NAP activities within their overall strategy to make the Philippine army more gender-inclusive. It is important to note that the Philippine army had already started implementing gender-inclusive activities because of the 1992 Women in Development and Nation Building Act. While this law focuses primarily on providing equal opportunities to women rather than enhancing their roles as peacebuilders,⁶⁰ it has laid the basis for greater will and capacity to implement the NAP. In that sense, the NAP is part of an incremental process of gender mainstreaming in the Philippine army.

“*They [civil society organizations] were the ones who introduced the NAP and WPS to us; they invited us to their meetings and trainings. They have a very focused agenda. Even in our Gender and Development training, they just want to focus on the NAP.* - Security Sector Representative”

The development of the NAP was largely inclusive. In terms of implementation, OPAPP has granted some funds to civil



The Philippine army in gender sensitivity training. Photo by Kelsey Coolidge.

society organizations to implement the NAP,⁶¹ but civil society organizations are not involved in the steering committee and generally undertake their work separately from the activities of the NSCWPS, albeit in consultation with the NSCWPS to avoid duplication.⁶² One OPAPP official stated, "We need to clean our house first before taking on civil society organizations as partners." In Mindanao, some organizations reported a disconnect from implementation activities led by Manila. One Mindanao-based organization reportedly received invitations to attend workshops by OPAPP at the beginning of the process, but then heard little about the NAP after it was developed. Others suggested that NAP development was championed by women's groups in Manila without streamlining the NAP in the context of armed conflict in Mindanao and existing peacebuilding activities there.

In Mindanao, some organizations reported a disconnect from implementation activities led by Manila.

The exclusion of civil society from the steering committee also has implications for **monitoring** the NAP's implementation. The document itself includes a formal monitoring and evaluation framework that specifies indicators, timeframes, and key actors but does not specify a system for monitoring and evaluation and reporting (though the NAP specifically calls for the development of such a system). While the government-led NSCWPS oversees NAP implementation, the NAP also explicitly calls for the "involvement of civil society organizations, particularly peace and women's groups, in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the NAP."⁶³

The result of a lack of structured inclusion of civil society is multiple shadow reports produced by different civil society organizations with external support. Each of the 17 government agencies are only required to report on one NAP-related program activity in order to streamline the process. That way, government agencies do not need to report on all indicators. OPAPP itself was in the process of launching its own report in September 2015, along with a database on NAP indicators developed from data they received from all involved agencies.

The discrepancy between what is called for in the NAP and what has been put in place is clear when it comes to **funding** mechanisms. There is the GAD budget system, which had been

introduced through the Magna Carta. There is also the PAMANA framework, whose funds are only available for local and national government agencies in insecure or conflict-affected regions and are intended to fund the NAP-related activities of civil society organizations. However, both structures are not exclusively developed to support the NAP. Government agencies are encouraged to report their NAP spending along with their GAD budget planning, but there appears to be no separate requirement to report on NAP-related spending. However, since GAD budget planning requires compliance and monitoring by PCW, this system offers a more enforceable mechanism upon which to fund NAP-related activities.

However, efforts to reach the grassroots have led to the development of localized national action plans since 2014, and “the government is [currently] coursing local NAP implementation through PAMANA projects in LGUs and in areas where the peace process had led the closure of the armed conflict.”⁶⁴

Localization initiatives have taken many forms. For example, the organization WE Act 1325 did capacity-building work with select local government units across the country and assisted them with drafting local plans and legislation. At the national level, the government is funneling local NAP implementation through local government unit projects in PAMANA areas as well as others deemed as post-conflict. Various NAP localization initiatives have taken place in designated PAMANA areas across the country, including ARMM provinces and those affected by the CPP-NPA and National Democratic Front armed groups.

Impact of the National Action Plan

“**Women’s participation made the NAP, not the other way around.** - Academic

Women’s participation in peace and security—relevant roles in the Philippines has increased since the NAP was launched in 2010. In 2010, women comprised 22% of the Philippine House of Representatives and just 13% of the Senate. As of May 2016, these proportions are at 30% and 25%, respectively. The proportion of women in the police force increased from 12% in 2011 to 14% in 2014 (close to the 15% target). The armed forces also increased the composition of their ranks from 3% women in 2011 to 9% in 2014 (still short of the 20% target). These increases can be attributed to a variety of gender-sensitive legislations and policies passed during this period, including the NAP, as well as women’s longstanding demands for greater representation in parliament and more gender-sensitive approaches to peace and security.

Since the Philippines boasted a suite of gender laws and policies years before launching a national action plan for Resolution 1325, it was difficult for many

interview participants to distinguish changes resulting directly from the NAP from changes influenced by other existing laws or international commitments. One example is the 1992 Women in Development and Nation Building Act; a majority of interviewees across all sectors reported a similar, significant change directly attributable to the National Action Plan: the government’s recognition that women in conflict zones are not merely victims but also leaders and champions of peace in their communities. The NAP is generally viewed as an acknowledgement of the roles women were already playing in informal peace and security processes before the plan existed.

“**Coming from a women’s organization, when we speak about peace, we speak vis-a-vis women’s access to economic opportunities, roles in society, access to social services, etc. That’s how we contextualize what peace is.**

- Civil Society Representative

At the same time, some civil society representatives pointed out that the efforts to improve implementation of the NAP should also address the concept of peace more broadly. The NAP, for all its worth, does not always deliver on its purpose because deep-seated patriarchal structures have not changed and impede women’s advancement on different levels. In that sense, peace is not just the absence of violence. Women’s active socio-economic participation in rebuilding communities and sustaining peace and security is impossible as long as patriarchal attitudes toward women continue to govern behavior. This is still a problem in Mindanao, but one interviewee from a faith-based organization stated that “We have to understand that everything cultural is not written in stone. If [women’s] lives are dictated by the community, that won’t help them. They have to realize that for certain concepts, mankind established these; these will change. And they have

Ceremony honoring Philippine peacekeepers. UN Photo by Logan Abassi.



the power to change it.” To this end, it is also important to note that the NAP has mandated help from the media and academia to promote attitudinal change, but progress in this area is difficult to assess, except within the Philippine army.

As mentioned, there are some indications that the Philippine army has shifted to applying a stronger human security approach to dealing with conflict. While this transition is not a direct outcome of the NAP, it demonstrates that the NAP is a tool for increasing the army’s accountability and broadening its perspective on women in peace and security. One major step was the increase in the number of female soldiers deployed in conflict-affected areas, because women in combat roles elevate the army’s ability to work with civilian women and identify community needs in conflict zones. In reality, female soldiers continue to be discouraged from performing combat duties and are most often assigned to desk jobs, even though the 1992 Women in Development and Nation Building Act allows them to perform combat duty. This situation not only impedes the realization and successful implementation of the army’s roadmap, but also negatively affects women’s chances of promotion compared with the chances of male peers who are deployed to combat operations, according to interviewees from the military. Similarly, other gender mainstreaming activities such as more gender trainings on dealing with the special needs of women and children are met with resistance because combat training is perceived as being a bigger priority. Older generations in the Philippine army in particular are perceived as being less cooperative.

Attitude change does not happen overnight, but it has taken shape over time with the Philippine army considering women’s increased presence as active combatants, but also in terms of the army’s collaboration with civil society. While the level of engagement has its origin in the army’s roadmap, the joint trainings for army personnel have increased with the NAP. The potential to work with local communities in conjunction with civil society organizations to implement the peace process has outweighed the disadvantages of operating in isolation and carrying on the legacy of the Marcos regime.

So far, such developments have not been monitored successfully, and it remains difficult to assess how much government, civil society, and the security sector have really been able to achieve in implementing the NAP’s objectives. One major obstacle, according to some interviewees, most notably from civil society and women’s groups in Mindanao, is the lack of communication regarding progress given to those

working at local levels, leading to a perception that the NAP is being directed from Manila without sufficient consultations beyond the capital during the implementation phase.

“*If you look at our society, there are more women. When we go to communities, there are a lot of women. We should have an army that looks like a society, with more women.*

- Security Sector Representative

3. COLLABORATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY

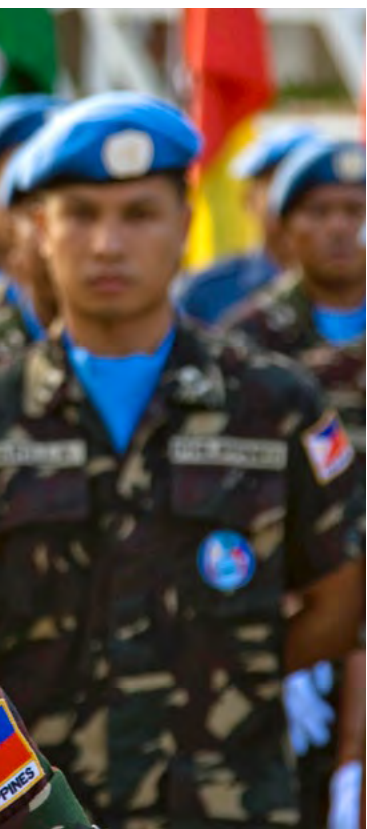
Coordination and collaboration among state agencies and civil society organizations has grown steadily since both the Magna Carta and the NAP passed. For example, the army introduced their 2010 “Winning hearts and minds” program (officially called Bayanihan 2010) in order to refocus their activities on building civil–military relations. In the process, the Philippine Army Multi-Sectoral Advisory Board was introduced, which consists of academics and civil society members who oversee the Army Transformation Roadmap. Interviewees reported this is part of a larger shift in the armed forces to broaden its scope from national security to human security.

“*We do not work alone. We seek the help of our civil society partners and government agency partners in the formulation of what should be in the law and in the implementing of rules and regulations.*

- Government Representative

According to PCW representatives, the interaction between government and civil society is a cross-cutting feature of gender-sensitive laws in the Philippines. Most civil society organizations reported sharing information and attending meetings with government, and government sharing information with them. Broadly, civil society’s critical role in advocating for key women’s rights legislation and policies, like the NAP, has consistently been recognized by government officials. PCW representatives went so far as to say that the NAP is “a good example of a plan made through collaboration of government and civil society organizations.” Anecdotal evidence suggests that government agencies regularly consult or interact with civil society groups. Civil society organizations are the “watchdogs” that hold government accountable. In fact, academia and civil society are considered, according to a representative of a foreign donor agency, as vibrant and important supporters of government-led activities.

The problem of uneven inclusion is not limited to government–civil society interactions. Within civil society itself, there is a perception that some organizations play a much larger role in NAP development than others. Women’s groups based in Davao City reported an additional layer of exclusion—they were consulted during the early stages of NAP development during the regional consultations in 2009, but do not seem to



have been updated on the process or the plan since. Some interviewees attributed this to the idea that the NAP “was of the [national] government” and that this generated hesitancy about the plan at the local level.

Collaboration between the Philippine army and civil society appears to have increased in intensity and improved in quality. Currently, the army is the only military branch of the Armed Forces that actively mainstreams gender and implements the NAP. Cooperation happens mainly with regard to gender-sensitive trainings for peacekeepers and army personnel. By providing trainings on violence against women or on gender more broadly, many civil society groups saw the opportunity to discuss peace as well, thereby laying the groundwork for promoting the NAP and the women, peace, and security agenda. By engaging civil society organizations more directly, the Philippine army has been able to enhance its visibility on the ground and also change its image. However, such relations do not extend to those organizations whose activism has been branded “communist” in nature. In consideration of the longstanding conflict with the CPP-NPA, such branding has major implications for these organizations as their work is identified with the activism of a declared enemy of the state.

The otherwise reciprocal relationship between government and civil society does not seem to work as well among civil society groups, suggesting divisions amongst these organizations. Some interviewees expressed differing views on what the most appropriate role for civil society regarding the NAP is, with some opting to collaborate with the government or armed forces on NAP-related activities and others suggesting that civil society must act as a watchdog rather than partner with government. Philippine civil society also struggles with the fault lines of generational differences. The gap between “senior and younger groups” goes beyond ideologies and experiences. Women’s concerns “vary substantially based on geography, ethnicity, religion, and class.” While this particular quote refers to gender-sensitive programming that addresses

the unique needs of young women and girls, the substance of it can be easily applied to women’s groups that operate in the Philippines. The NAP needs to transcend generational differences.

This tension, in turn, has often negatively impacted the relationship between government agencies and civil society, risking the development of favoritism. One example comes from a Mindanao-based organization claiming that an organization working with Muslim communities in Manila is “closer to power” and has “lost grassroots connections.” Furthermore, some women’s groups in the Philippines are reluctant to “break the ice” with the Muslim communities. Inter-religious dialogue has been successful in some areas, according to one civil society representative, but is also difficult because it is often hampered by different groups who think of Muslims in Mindanao as a monolithic bloc. It seems that disregarding cultural and religious differences or being indifferent to the subtle nuances of Muslim communities has made it difficult to build a more inclusive platform for the NAP. Nonetheless, regional programs and trainings on mainstreaming women, peace, and security have helped develop mechanisms for Muslim women to slowly gain access to public spaces.

“*The experience of Armed Forces of the Philippines’ operations before? We became antagonistic with civil society organizations. In those cases, our operations would stop or be hindered because of those challenges. We try to change; civil society organizations are not our enemies. If we work with them, we can get the moral high ground against internal security threats.* - Security Sector Representative”

This apparent divide between Manila and Mindanao contributes to the observations that the NAP as it stands has not had the desired impact. The importance of women’s groups in Mindanao working with the local government has

A Philippine UN police officer trains Sudanese officers. UN Photo by Paul Banks.



been recognized by PCW, and Davao City has been able to set in place “innovative GAD structures, processes, and programs that have been sustained if not improved by LGU[s] through the years.” A great example of localizing gender provisions, some civil society representatives contest that more “periodic consultation...at the local level” is needed and that “local people...need to be asked and heard.”

4. CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND WAYS FORWARD

“*We are slowly opening more spaces for a gender-inclusive society in Mindanao. Policies on the higher level and on-the ground actions are needed... It is important for women’s groups to work with local NGOs and to create local NAPs.*” - INGO Representative

Overall, interviews suggest that although the “NAP gave life to 1325,” implementation is limping. A few interviewees pointed out that the first iteration read more like a “wish list” of changes rather than a policy with actionable, realistic goals. The plan has been revised twice since the 2010 launch, most recently in 2014, to tighten its language and goals.

However, attributing changes in policy or behavior specifically to the NAP is difficult. With the sheer amount of national and local legislation focused on women’s rights and empowerment in the Philippines, it is difficult to directly tie the NAP with increases in women’s representation and participation. This is especially true when comparing the NAP with the Magna Carta. Since the Magna Carta is a Philippine law, for some this document carries more weight, whereas others consider the NAP their “bible.” This suggests that without institutional strength, the NAP is perceived to be much weaker than other national legislation on women that has been formalized and debated in the Philippine Congress. It may also suggest that the NAP speaks to a limited community of practitioners and has yet to garner wide public support.

There is a reported perception among some government agencies and LGUs that the GAD budget can be used for any ostensibly women-related activities, like ballroom dancing or beauty pageants.

Furthermore, the government has a financing mechanism in place through the Magna Carta. There is a reported perception among some government agencies and LGUs that the GAD budget can be used for any ostensibly women-related activities, like ballroom dancing or beauty pageants. While this spending is prohibited and PCW monitors and enforces the proper use of GAD funds, there is no explicit requirement for government agencies and LGUs to fund NAP-related program and activities. There is an added difficulty to explaining the GAD budgeting requirements and their use in financing NAP activities.

While the GAD budget requirements are an important component of Philippine legislation, providing more training

on GAD budgeting can be a next step in ensuring that NAP activities are sufficiently streamlined and aligned with the provisions of the Magna Carta. The NAP is not a stand-alone document; it needs to be understood as an extension of the Magna Carta to be implemented effectively.

The Philippine army is a great example of how activities set in place through different legislation can be expanded and refined by using the NAP. In February 2016, the Philippine army announced that it would be developing its own implementation plan for the Philippine NAP while continuing to promote gender mainstreaming in “mission areas” of territorial defense and humanitarian and disaster relief operations. This formalization of roles and activities within the Philippine army in regard to NAP-related activities signifies an important change. Interviewees in the military suggested that the Philippine army is the only military branch to be actively incorporating gender-sensitivity and gender-mainstreaming trainings, and its attempts to incorporate those changes into the internal work culture could lay the basis for other security sector institutions to follow suit. (Adequate information to examine the relationship between civil society and the Philippine police was not obtained.)

Efforts have been made to mainstream the NAP in Local Development Plans since 2012, but again - without proper coordination and efficient monitoring and evaluation, the effectiveness of these plans remains questionable. Indeed, a robust monitoring and evaluation system for the national plan could also help to garner public buy-in as people could more easily assess and explain the change created by the NAP.

Although its passage is still pending, the BBL could become an important tool for localizing the NAP in the Philippines. There are differing opinions on the BBL as such. In its scope, the draft law has several gender-specific provisions that touch upon both the Magna Carta and the NAP. The BBL recognizes the importance of women in nation-building and development to ensure peace and security for the Bangsamoro people as a whole. In alignment with national gender policies, the draft BBL requires the allocation of GAD funds to guarantee gender-sensitive programming. Women are supposed to be included in the decisions on how these funds will be used to “implement special development programs and laws for women.” By doing so, the BBL offers a broad framework to include women in the process of establishing a new autonomous region.

“*Government has grand plans, and it’s good that they do. The government is the lead, and is very well backed by a very vibrant civil society and academe... The bigger question is whether Congress will support the BBL.*” - INGO Representative

The exclusive structure of the NSCWPS does not resonate well with different stakeholders in the Philippines. What one respondent called an “institutional hijacking”—meaning the WPS agenda has been pressed into the bureaucratic structures of the NAP—others consider a necessary process to implement

the NAP and finance its activities. In other words, “The moment you institutionalize [the NAP] and have government taking the handle of the plan, that process begins to alienate the plan from the communities who are supposed to be its main beneficiaries.” This is particularly evident in Mindanao, where women’s organizations are very familiar with Resolution 1325 but less so with the NAP that, in theory, should relate directly to their lives as women in conflict-affected regions. In fact, there is an observable indifference to and ambivalence on the NAP in terms of both the document itself and its implementation status.



Women are also victims of gender stereotypes; policies need to change to create an enabling environment for women to participate... [There is also] a need to change mindsets, to remove gender biases and stereotypes.

- Government Representative



On the sub-national level, “gender is a soft agenda; people don’t understand what it’s all about, it doesn’t give them votes.” As some interviewees said, men especially tend to view “gender” as synonymous with “women.” For this reason, PCW supported the creation of MOVE: Men Opposed to Violence-Against-Women Everywhere. MOVE now has members (MOVERS) all over the country and has become a civil society organization. Increasing the efforts that engage those who are not familiar with the women, peace, and security agenda could pay dividends in generating great public awareness and support for the NAP. With the specific NAP stipulation to use media for combatting gender discrimination, social media use in particular needs to be streamlined. Especially for younger generations, exposure to gender-sensitive messaging can be achieved on a broader scale if civil society begins to use modern, innovative tools to implement NAP-related activities.

The NAP is not a stand-alone document; it needs to be understood as an extension of the Magna Carta to be implemented effectively.

In sum, the Philippines has a robust and impressive package of national and sub-national legislation and policy framework. More effort needs to be made to bridge the gap between Manila, the political epicenter of the Philippines, and Mindanao, home to a number of conflict- and disaster-affected regions. This can be achieved through consultative processes with LGUs and local civil society organizations on specific pieces of legislations, programs, or activities that, importantly, report on progress and seek feedback. Furthermore, this is essential in order for the NAP to fill the needs of women living in conflict-affected regions. While the GAD budgeting mechanism is a crowning achievement for women’s empowerment, there needs to be an explicit budgeting mechanism tied to NAP-related programs and activities. The existing budgeting framework provides a suitable venue to do so. Encouraging broader engagement with the women, peace, and security agenda through the NAP is essential to increasing public awareness and shoring up public support. This can, in turn, increase public demand for the NAP and influence funding and programmatic decisions made throughout the Philippines.



Philippine Senator “Pia” Cayetano addresses press conference. UN photo by Jenny Rockett.

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SERBIA

Alexandra Amling, Emmicki Roos

Serbia ranks relatively high on gender-equality indices, yet women's influence on peace and security processes continues to lag. The Serbian National Action Plan, coordinated by the Ministry of Defense, places particular emphasis on improving women's participation in the security sector. There are some indications that attitudes toward women's roles in this area are shifting, but the 2010 NAP fell short of many of its goals as implementation stalled and coordination mechanisms lacked clarity. Nonetheless, the process of creating the NAP has led to greater dialogue between the state and civil society on peace and security issues. Although some sectors of civil society were disappointed by the NAP's failure to address the root causes of conflict and engage with past crimes in Serbia while simultaneously prioritizing the reform of the security sector more, the revision of the NAP that is now underway has the potential to not only make the NAP more holistic and less narrowly focused on the security sector, but also to ensure a more inclusive process.

1. WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY IN SERBIA

The conflicts in the former Yugoslavia had a major impact on the social and economic fabric of the region. Often cited for their genocidal nature, the conflicts included horrendous crimes against humanity, including sexual abuse and torture. The ruptures the Yugoslav Wars (1991-1999) caused remain vivid in Serbia's national memory today. Although largely excluded from high-level peace negotiations, women and women's groups were active in peacebuilding activities during and after the wars. They built coalitions for peace across communities and advocated for the official recognition of the gendered nature of the war crimes. They continue to seek a more robust peace and gender equality in different sectors at the local, national, and regional level, with mixed results.

Conflict Analysis

Taken together, the Yugoslav Wars are considered the deadliest conflict in Europe since World War II. Estimates are hotly contested, but over the span of eight years, approximately 140,000 people were killed and about 4 million were displaced, according to the International Center for Transitional Justice.¹ In fact, Serbia hosted one of the biggest refugee populations in Europe in the late 1990s as many ethnic Serbs from the former Yugoslavia fled to Serbia fearing revenge and persecution. The wars involving Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, and Serbia wreaked havoc across Southeastern

Europe. The war crimes committed during that period included ethnic cleansing as a form of genocide and the widespread use of sexual violence against women, men, and children as a weapon of war.

Nature of the Conflict

Prior to the outbreak of the conflicts, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was one of the most developed and diverse countries in the Balkans, and featured a multi-cultural and multi-faith society with Orthodox Christianity, Islam, and Catholicism being the main religions. But the disintegration of the Communist bloc in the late 1980s and early 1990s and the political instability that ensued in southeastern Europe exacerbated existing tensions. A wave of nationalism as an alternative to communism and vying for political dominance are commonly cited as the main reasons for the growth of distrust in the region that eventually led to the outbreak of hostilities.² The conflicts went beyond real and perceived economic deprivation and diverging ideologies: political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia exploited xenophobia and ethnic tensions to stake political, economic, and territorial claims.

“The first thing to sacrifice when entering a country and dealing with an enemy are women's rights. [In the] last ten years, things have gotten worse not better.

- Security Sector Representative

After the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, the Kosovo Liberation Army intensified its armed struggle for independence from what had by then become the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (comprising the Republics of Montenegro and Serbia). In the late 1990s, the Serb-dominated Yugoslav Army and Serbian police deployed



in Kosovo and the conflict escalated. A diplomatic solution, in the form of the March 1999 Rambouillet agreement, failed. NATO intervened with military support to the Kosovo Liberation Army and bombarded large areas of Serbian territory. The bombings, which were not authorized by the UN Security Council, were perceived by Serbians as being unfair punishment by NATO. The status of Kosovo continues to be a major point of contention among Serbia, Kosovo's largely Albanian community, and the international community.

Throughout the Yugoslav Wars, ethno-nationalist battles played out on women's bodies. On one hand, women were elevated as guarantors of the nation who were expected to sacrifice their sons and husbands while saving the nation from "biological extinction" through reproduction, which was often forced.³ On the other hand, warring parties unleashed systematic campaigns of brutal sexual violence against women and girls during the wars. Estimates suggest between 20,000 and 50,000 women were raped.⁴ In many cases, belligerents carried out interethnic rape to confer the ethnic identity of the perpetrator on the child that could follow; this has been labeled "genocidal rape" since it accompanied a strategy of ethnic cleansing.⁵

Peace Process

In part as a result of the widespread sexual violence committed against women, the common view of women in relation to the Yugoslav Wars is of women as victims, but women were actively involved in peacebuilding both during and after the wars. The feminist anti-war movement in Serbia in particular was active from the start of the wars, continuously advocating for the cessation of hostilities. In fact, women were the driving force behind civil society development in the former Yugoslavia.

Bombed ruins of former Ministry of Defense. Photo by Alexandra Amling

Nonetheless, women were excluded from official peace negotiations and agreements that brought peace to the region.⁶ No women served as signatories, lead mediators, or negotiators in the Dayton Peace Accords, adopted in December 1995 by the presidents of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia.⁷ This was the first major peace agreement to be adopted after the Beijing Conference on Women the same year, in which 189 participating states established the Platform for Action to "increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels...and integrate a gender perspective in the resolution of armed or other conflicts."⁸

Women made up just 3% of negotiators in the Rambouillet negotiations over Kosovo in 1999, which ultimately failed.⁹ Following NATO's aerial bombardment and amid the threat of a ground invasion by NATO troops, Serbia's Slobodan Milošević accepted a deal that led to the deployment of the NATO-led peacekeeping force in Kosovo. When negotiations began over Kosovo's status in 2005, women were still absent.¹⁰ The international community has administered Kosovo through the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo since 1999.¹¹ Kosovo unilaterally declared independence in 2008; Serbia does not recognize its independence, and international recognition remains mixed.^{12, 13}

Post-conflict Justice and Reconciliation

The International Criminal Tribunal of the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) has indicted 161 individuals who are considered to bear the greatest responsibility for atrocities in the Yugoslav Wars, and one-third of all those convicted by the ICTY were found guilty of sexually violent crimes.¹⁴ Indeed, the court advanced international jurisprudence in its approach to prosecuting crimes of sexual violence in conflict. It formally recognized the link between rape and ethnic cleansing as a form of genocide, and was one of the first tribunals to prosecute sexual violence



as a war crime¹⁵ and to investigate sexual violence against men, which also took place, though to a lesser extent.¹⁶

Serbia continues to experience challenges in dealing with the past. The majority of those indicted by the ICTY were ethnic Serbs, who have been accused of committing a greater number of more serious crimes compared to other groups.¹⁷ Most recently, Radovan Karadžić, the former Bosnian Serb leader and president of Republika Srpska during the Bosnian War, was found guilty of genocide and crimes against humanity, in part due to his role in the 1995 Srebrenica massacres.¹⁸ A significant portion of Serbs consider the ICTY to be biased against them, and most think its prosecutions do not contribute to reconciliation.¹⁹

“*In my opinion, Serbia is still not ready to face its post-conflict heritage, particularly about [war-related sexual violence]. If we want to implement 1325, we need to see [more commitment] in this area.* - INGO Representative”

In 2003, Serbia established its own special war crimes tribunal after the newly elected democratic government recognized Serbia’s responsibility to investigate war crimes. However, critics argue that a narrative of denial persists in relation to war crimes, despite many initiatives aimed at confronting the past.²⁰ This may be attributed to a number of causes: the failure of some political leaders to sufficiently acknowledge the extent of war crimes and to grasp the links between gender and nationalism during the war; the lack of a formal process of reconciliation; and educational curricula that promote narratives of victimhood while failing to acknowledge gendered atrocities committed by Serbs.²¹

Women’s Participation in Peace and Security

It is widely acknowledged that the Dayton Peace Accords brought a precarious peace to Bosnia, Serbia, and Croatia in 1995, one that failed to address the root causes of the conflict or lay a pathway for healing ethnic divides. Lesser known (and possibly related) is the exclusion of women from the peace process and the negotiating parties’ failure to address the differential impact of the conflict on women and men.²²

Women were the driving force behind civil society development in the former Yugoslavia. Nonetheless, women were excluded from official peace negotiations and agreements.

As the wars started in 1991, women in the former Yugoslavia established networks and dialogue across the newly created borders dividing ethnic groups. They bridged communication gaps and organized to launch non-violent anti-war actions and protests.²³ The most prominent women’s organizations for peace were formed during that time, including the well-known

Women in Black. By promoting pacifism and the protection of women’s rights, these organizations contributed to the prerequisites for peace in the region,²⁴ and have continuously advocated for the acknowledgement of the sexual violence committed against women, men, boys, and girls during the conflict.

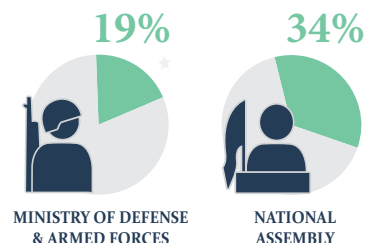
Despite the successes of these groups in opening and maintaining lines of communication across ethnic divides, their knowledge of the root causes of conflict across communities, and the depth of their work for peace, they were not invited to contribute to the formal peace negotiations that culminated in the Dayton agreement—whether as mediators, negotiators, technical experts, or observers.²⁵ Restrictive gender roles in the region meant that women’s participation in formal politics before and during the war had been extremely limited, so they were not represented in the political elite that could participate in Dayton.²⁶ As a result, they could not bring their distinct experiences of war and diverse proposals for peace into the talks.

The gender-blind language that is found in the Dayton Peace Accords did not live up to the commitments made in the Beijing Platform for Action.²⁷ The agreement’s provisions failed to account for the gendered nature of the conflict or the need for inclusive peacebuilding. The same pattern of exclusion repeated itself in the peace negotiations between Serbia and Kosovo.

Gender Dynamics

In its 2014 Social Institutions and Gender Index, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) classified post-war Serbia as having “very low” levels of gender-based discrimination, and the World Economic Forum ranked it 45th out of 145 countries in the 2015 Global Gender Gap Index.²⁸ Women’s participation in politics is particularly high relative to other countries; as of 2016, women make up 34% of representatives in Serbia’s National Assembly, an increase of 11% since 2008 that is partly attributable to the introduction of a gender quota.²⁹ This relatively high level of representation is not, however, found in the executive branch,³⁰ in which 5 out of 19 ministries are run by women as of August 2016.³¹ More broadly, Serbian citizens do not rate gender equality as high on their political agendas and most understand gender equality in terms of violence against women rather than women’s agency or participation in decision-making.³²

PROPORTION OF WOMEN





Ministry of Defense billboard promoting women in military. Photo by Alexandra Amling.

Indeed, violence against women remains significant in Serbia: for example, more than half of all women in central Serbia have experienced domestic violence in their lifetime, and 38% have experienced it in the previous year.³³ The low number of cases reported to the police indicates victims may fear stigmatization, threats, and further violence.³⁴

Present-day violence against women often has links to Serbia's post-conflict context as well as broader gender inequality. As post-traumatic stress from the war persists among former soldiers, war victims, and family members, strains in marital and family relationships frequently ensue, increasing the risk of domestic violence.³⁵ In fact, many killings over the past few years have been associated with post-traumatic stress syndrome, although reporting on it remains low.³⁶ Widespread availability of guns that were not turned in following the war compounds this problem as former combatants who have difficulty transitioning to non-violent behaviors often have access to weapons.³⁷ Many interviewees reported that social attitudes also play a role: deep-rooted patriarchal values and the persistence of traditional gender roles have made it difficult to change behaviors when it comes to gender equality and women's rights.

To some extent, it is difficult to gauge the status of women in conflict-torn and post-conflict Serbia as official gender-segregated data is often lacking. Beyond a dearth of official statistics on female victims of sexual and gender-based violence, there is also data missing on the number of female former combatants (or family members of former combatants) who have participated in rehabilitation and reintegration programs, and on the status of female refugees and displaced persons.³⁸

Existing Legal Framework

The Republic of Serbia has signed and ratified a large body of international instruments that acknowledge women's rights as human rights.³⁹ Chief among them are the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and its Optional Protocols (1981, 2002). Serbia is committed to the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. As a UN member state, Serbia is obliged to implement all eight UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace, and security.⁴⁰

Since the early 2000s, the state has further demonstrated its commitment with a considerable amount of domestic legislation in addition to national strategies and action plans related to gender equality and women's participation in politics and the security sector. However, implementation of these laws and strategies has been uneven and critics have voiced concerns that the situation has deteriorated since the 2014 elections—most notably with the decision to close the Gender

Equality Directorate and replace it with a coordination body that lacks sufficient budgetary resources.⁴¹

2. THE SERBIA NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY

“*The NAP is perceived by Serbian civil society, particularly women's peace movement, as too militarized. It does not serve the original Resolution 1325.*

- INGO Representative

Serbia adopted its first National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and Women, Peace, and Security in 2010 for the period 2010–2015, becoming the second country in the region to adopt a NAP on Resolution 1325, after Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁴² The NAP is distinctive in that it is coordinated by the Ministry of Defense rather than the ministries more commonly used elsewhere, such as a gender ministry, ministry of foreign affairs, or ministry of interior. The plan identifies six strategic priority areas (see box). It calls for the establishment of three bodies for its implementation: the Political Council, which is a high-level political body to create political conditions necessary for implementation of NAP objectives; the Multi-Sectoral Coordination Body, which is the operational body of the Government; and the Supervisory Body, a monitoring mechanism overseeing the implementation of the NAP.⁴³ In consideration of Serbia's accession to the EU, the NAP draws from several EU documents which highlight the importance of equal opportunities for men and women in the realm of peace and security.⁴⁴ In fact, the promotion of and

progress toward gender equality requires reforms across all sectors as a necessary prerequisite for Serbia's membership in the EU.⁴⁵ These stipulations clearly serve as a pull factor for advancing national legislation in this regard, offering Serbian women's groups a vital bargaining chip for demanding more changes from their government. Nonetheless, some civil society organizations expressed concern that the framework was born out of the interest "to gain international legitimacy" rather than actual will to implement Resolution 1325.⁴⁶

| SERBIA'S NATIONAL ACTION PLAN | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 2010-2015 | |
| HOSTED BY: | Ministry of Defense |
| BUDGET ESTIMATE: | Unspecified |
| FOCAL AREAS: | Security sector representation |
| | Participation in decision-making |
| | Participation in conflict resolution, post-conflict situations, and multinational corporations |
| | Violence against women |
| | Training and professional development |
| | Media and awareness raising |

Development and Implementation of the National Action Plan

It is recognized by diverse stakeholders in Serbia that the NAP is a result of substantive advocacy efforts by Serbian women's organizations who have been working on issues related to women, peace, and security for over 20 years. These advocacy efforts have included regional and global counterparts such as United Nations Development Fund for Women (now UN Women), the International Network of Women in Black, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Women's Lobby, and the UN Development Programme, among others.⁴⁷

“Everybody wants to coordinate but nobody wants to be coordinated.” - Security Sector Representative

The nongovernmental Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence facilitated the development of Serbia's NAP among 11 governmental ministries that together formed a working group. The reason for making the Ministry of Defense (MoD) the chair “lies in the fact that the content of UN SC Resolution 1325 in large part refers to the role of women in the security system or women civilians affected by the acts of security forces in war and peace, and it is therefore necessary that the

provisions of the UN SC Resolution 1325 be implemented first in the security sector of the Republic of Serbia.”⁴⁸

Beyond aims of increasing women's influence in the security sector, the NAP also focuses on increasing women's participation in conflict resolution and advancing legal protections for women from discrimination and gender-based violence. In part to address women's exclusion from the peace process that led to the Dayton Accords, the Serbian NAP underlines the importance of women and “institutional mechanisms for equal participation of women in conflict resolution by ensuring the participation of at least 30% women in negotiating teams.”⁴⁹

Many of the women's organizations working for peace and human rights in the 1990s adhered strictly to nonviolence and continue to ardently espouse its values in contradistinction to military action. The approach of these feminist anti-war organizations in Serbia is to advocate for the abolition of the military because of the experiences of many women and men during the Yugoslav Wars. Against this backdrop, some civil society representatives and women's activists view the NAP in its current form and process of implementation as a tool for militarization that does not acknowledge the root causes of conflict and fails to address war crimes and acts of sexual violence. Some individuals also drew on the idea of militarization to object to the international women, peace, and security agenda more broadly, which has become a contested subject in feminist studies.⁵⁰ The key points of this new debate are evolving around the argument that the women, peace, and security agenda has led to “a softening of feminist opposition to war...from aiming to end all wars to making wars safer for women.”⁵¹

“There is a very high degree of mistrust between the military or security institutions and some feminist groups, not only in Belgrade, but probably everywhere...”
- Government Representative

Discrepancies in perceptions of the NAP's content and purpose are also evident in the understanding of **political will and commitment** of the government to develop and implement the NAP. On one hand, a number of policymakers have articulated support for the NAP, policymakers whose goals frequently dovetail with political parties' and networks' broader policy objectives relating to gender equality.⁵² For example, the Women's Parliamentary Network has expressed support for the NAP as a tool that advances the group's objectives.⁵³ Interviewees from some civil society organizations, women's groups, and intergovernmental bodies with close ties to or good working relationships with the government also highlight the commitment of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the MoD. In particular, these interviewees reported that the Ministry of Defense leadership is dedicated to the NAP and carries enough political weight to find solutions to implement it at the operational level.

STRUCTURE OF STAKEHOLDERS IN SERBIA'S NAP*



*Interpretation of how NAP was designed for monitoring implementation.

SERBIA

“ I think we need to invest more in the qualitative contribution of women. [But] if no women are represented ... if it's really a boy's club, you cannot expect many women to get involved. It gets more difficult for those who want to. - INGO Representative ”

Many interviewees stated that the hierarchical structure of the military has made the MoD particularly effective in leading the process; once the women, peace, and security agenda was accepted and internalized across its leadership it could be integrated into the wider system. Yet this has also resulted in a primary focus on increasing women’s participation and gender considerations in the security sector rather than other sectors. Nonetheless, an MoI representative pointed out that other ministries should step up their commitment and become more involved. Civil society representatives highlighted the role the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) should play since it could broaden the scope of the NAP in terms of dealing with global issues instead of only internal ones, but also because the MoFA deals with security as well.

On the other hand, the majority of civil society representatives interviewed disagreed with the notion that there is sufficient political will. Many civil society organizations expressed concern that the development of the NAP was not a result of genuine aspiration to implement Resolution 1325 but

rather a process driven by donors and the government’s ambitions to become a member of the EU; a process that will stop once external funding subsides. The external pressure on Serbia to fulfill requirements leads to a situation where changes and reform are not perceived as being “a result of internalization of 1325 or policy understanding of women’s equality.” This is further complicated by the fact that “there is no true continuation in many areas” because changes in government often affect priorities and agendas. Therefore, many policy processes, including the development and implementation of the NAP, are perceived as being difficult to sustain despite the current commitment by the MoD to lead the implementation process.

There are also divergent perceptions regarding the level of **inclusion and coordination** for civil society in government processes. Two independent 2014 studies highlighted the high-level Political Council (consisting of state secretaries and presidents of parliamentary committees) and the Multi-Sectoral Coordinating Body, which is the “operational body” of the government tasked with implementing the NAP, as exhibiting best practice for

their coordination potential⁵⁴ and promising achievements in the security sector.⁵⁵ But the functionality of these bodies remains uncertain, and decision-making and communication channels within and between these mechanisms are unclear. Numerically, both the Political Council and Multi-Sectoral Coordination Body have high levels of participation from government officials; civil society organizations and women’s groups are excluded from both bodies. However, the sheer number of members makes any regular taking of action difficult. Moreover, the complexity of the coordination structure is difficult for many civil society members to dissect. One interviewed government leader stated the need for more clearly defined roles because horizontal functionality (meaning more collaboration across different segments of the government) and coordination are currently lacking.

Many civil society organizations expressed concern that the development of the NAP was not a result of genuine aspiration to implement UNSCR 1325 but rather a process driven by donors and the government’s ambitions to become a member of the EU.

Many civil society actors and women’s activists argue that what is missing from the bodies is clear representation of civil society organizations. A member of both the Coordination Body for Gender Equality and the Political Council recognized

that “civil society organizations are a bit angry, and they have [a] right to [be].” At the same time, he questioned the extent to which civil society can be included, because they may not be eligible, legally speaking, to become an integral part of the Political Council. Perhaps due to the focus on hard security issues, women’s anti-war organizations felt dismissed as being irrelevant to the process, even though these organizations had been spearheading public awareness campaigns on domesticating Resolution 1325 since the resolution’s adoption in 2000. This sentiment was echoed by other civil society representatives, who suggested that civil society was only included in two consultations during the drafting process. Given only 15 days to comment on the draft, many civil society organizations reported difficulty providing a thorough response, and felt that some of the comments they did provide, particularly those concerning survivors of sexual violence, were not addressed.



The OSCE votes in Belgrade to set agenda for 20th Annual Session. Photo by OSCE on Flickr.

“*[You] cannot unify civil society... I think it’s really important to have very strong feminist organizations... On the other hand, you also need to have organizations who can bridge [divides] and collaborate. I don’t think that they need to have the same agenda. They have different perspectives and different interests, and that’s important.*

- Government Representative

In other words, despite the bodies having many coordination mechanisms in place, and understanding civil society’s participation as being important, civil society continues to complain of a lack of inclusion and collaboration. But recent developments suggest that the government is willing to increase the level of inclusion for civil society in decision-making on the NAP. A working group with both government and civil society representatives was reportedly established in November 2015 to lead the revision of the NAP, which expired at the end of 2015. With the support of the OSCE, the working group, the Serbian government’s Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, and the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities organized public consultations on the content of the new NAP in six towns across Serbia. The 250 participants included representatives of government, civil society, and the media.⁵⁶

“*We need a smart campaign to communicate to citizens, so they understand that [civil society organizations] are a tool for them to influence the decision-making processes without being politically active, so they don’t have to be engaged in political parties but their voice can still be heard in a much more organized manner.*

- Civil Society Representative

Challenges in coordination and inclusion also have repercussions regarding the ability to **monitor and evaluate** the implementation of the NAP. Tracking NAP progress across ministries is difficult because each ministry has its own indicators, which lack consistency. In addition, relevant ministries only report on activities they have implemented, making independent oversight difficult: outsiders cannot hold the ministries accountable for the rest of their commitments or gain an overview of overall achievements.⁵⁷ This in turn leads some civil society organizations to question transparency in the implementation of the NAP. These concerns do not always apply to the MoD, however, which is considered to be “the most transparent institution, as it regularly updates its website, uploading new documents..., while other public authorities do not.”⁵⁸

Civil society organizations produce their own shadow reports evaluating NAP implementation, which vary in scope, focus, and area of expertise.⁵⁹ Some of these reports try to capture the entire NAP rather than focusing on the chapters of the NAP that deal with the security sector, which the MoI and MoD are more likely to report on. Despite their differences, many of these shadow reports conclude that the government is falling short on its commitments to implement Resolution 1325.

This shortcoming is frequently noted in the lack of adequate **funding** for the implementation of activities identified by the NAP. According to the NAP, the Ministry of Finance should provide funds “based on the annual plans and expressed needs of the relevant ministries/directorates/agencies in the security sector.”⁶⁰ The NAP also stipulates gender-responsive budgeting activities for relevant entities in the security sector. Other provisions not pertaining to the security sector are asked to look for co-financing from partners such as UN Women, the EU, or OSCE.⁶¹ By specifying the source of funding and including elements of gender-responsive budgeting, the text of the Serbian NAP is promising relative to most others.⁶²

The reality looks different, however. According to one civil society representative, funding was readily available from

the UN to *develop* the NAP but the government never truly developed a budget for *implementation*. In 2014, civil society organizations suggested that, based on the Political Council's report, only foreign-funded activities had been carried out.⁶³ One security sector official tied the lack of funding to the lack of political will, stating that “so much depends on goodwill. If you don't want to deal with it, you will always have excuses that you don't have money.” Some critical voices have also come from government officials who support the costing of the NAP, meaning that all institutions would identify their role, then take that activity and include it in their own budget.

Impact of the National Action Plan

Interviewees reported evidence of the limited impact of the NAP, whether measured against its own objectives and activities or the transformation of attitudes and norms needed in order for it to sustain long-term change.

— “*I think the Ministry of Defense likes to promote the NAP, but I am not sure we can say that political will was demonstrated, that there has been some significant promotion of female officers in the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces.* - INGO Representative —”

In terms of attitudes and norms, some government representatives (although not completely satisfied with the results) have observed attitude changes in the security sector, particularly among personnel who receive mandatory two- to four-hour gender courses as part of pre-deployment training for peacekeeping operations. According to one army official, women are viewed differently and can take on new roles previously reserved for men. Also, the gradual attitude change has broadened the understanding of many troops who have returned from missions because they now recognize that “you cannot protect civilians if you don't have [a] mindset which is gender[ed] enough.”

Many interviewees from both government and non-government institutions cited the increase in the number of women in the security sector as the NAP's biggest impact—a significant NAP objective. However, available data does not support this perception: women's representation in the MoD and the Serbian Armed Forces has remained consistent at 19% from 2010 to 2014.⁶⁴ The proportion of women in the police force also remained relatively consistent.⁶⁵ One government official suggested that the NAP has made women in the security sector more visible, and arguably has resulted in more recognition of their contributions. An illustration of this was the military academy graduation ceremony in September 2015, when, for the first time in the history of Serbia, the top three graduates receiving awards were all women. One MoFA representative argued that the more valuable impact of the NAP will be a revision of the *roles* of women in security—and their contribution to leadership in the security sector beyond raising their numbers. There has not been a significant

increase in women's participation in the upper echelons of the security sector.⁶⁶

It appears that many of the NAP's proposed objectives and activities beyond the security sector have received limited attention since the NAP was adopted in 2010. However, the complexity of the coordination and reporting mechanism, exemplified in the myriad multi-stakeholder bodies and ministerial groups, impedes a clear accounting of what has been achieved and what has not.

What is clear is that most, if not all, activities undertaken so far have been funded by international donors.⁶⁷ Given the unpredictability this entails, many stakeholders would like to see the NAP costed with an allocated budget for each activity and a system for tracking funds allocated and disbursed. Some actors in civil society have specific expertise on costing and gender-related budgeting and have offered to assist the government with the costing of the NAP. It is one of the main points on the agenda of civil society for the revision of the current NAP.

Another element that may be limiting the NAP's potential impact is the persistent gap between it and other gender-sensitive policies, which interviewees suggested needs to be addressed by aligning them with each other. One interviewee also reported a lack of awareness of the links between the NAP and broader elements of gender equality and women's participation in policymaking, arguing that many women in the higher echelons of power “don't even know that 1325 is their instrument.” On the other hand, interviewees more closely engaged with government institutions suggested that greater communication between civil society and state actors has raised the level of awareness of Resolution 1325 in both sectors.

— “*The role of civil society ... has not been communicated well, in my opinion, and that's created a lot of bias against NGOs in Serbia.* - Civil Society Representative —”

Serbia's NAP addresses war crimes against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence, during the Yugoslav Wars under its fifth pillar (Protection), in Objectives 3.2 to 3.5. These are set in the broader framework of acknowledging sexual violence against women and girls as a crime against humanity. However, one academic suggested that in the absence of greater acknowledgment by the government of the experiences of women and men during the wars, the NAP “will not change the status quo and won't generate social change [but rather] maintain the past [structures].” A civil society representative stated it more poignantly: “[The NAP] deals with what happened afterwards and what kind of programs

One MoFA representative argued that the more valuable impact of the NAP will be a revision of the roles of women in security—and their contribution to leadership in the security sector beyond raising their numbers.

we should actually have for particular victims of gender-based violence, etc. It doesn't actually deal with the roots. And that's important because of prevention. You have to know what...the roots [are] in order to actually work more professionally and... not only on post-conflict situation."

3. COLLABORATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY

One side-effect of the NAP is an apparent increase in collaboration and, to a lesser extent, coordination between civil society and state institutions. Government and civil society collaborated throughout the development and implementation of the NAP to varying degrees. Since the NAP was adopted, an increase in collaboration has been particularly visible in civil society's work with the police, military, and MoD. Interviewees from civil society noted that the MoD has become more open to questions and suggestions from civil society organizations, and as a result the dialogue has increased. Even groups who were excluded from development or implementation of the NAP (see below) acknowledged better cooperation with the security sector, particularly the police, following the creation of the NAP; this has led to improved coordination of activities, especially at the provincial level.

Some civil society organizations further reported that this collaborative effort to coordinate more has shaped their understanding of institutional processes and procedures for tackling issues related to women, peace, and security, and that they have built stronger capacity to hold the government accountable as a result. It has also brought new actors into the women, peace, and security space and fostered new approaches to cooperation. For example, the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP), which did not work on Resolution 1325 specifically before the adoption of the NAP, was given a new role as mediator and facilitator to bridge gaps between civil society and government in light of the NAP. The BCSP has helped establish dialogue between these stakeholders and attempted to broaden civil society's inclusion further, even in the context of divisions among civil society groups.

Nonetheless, collaboration and coordination between civil society and the state have also proved challenging in many respects. Some civil society organizations felt excluded from the process and continue to have a difficult relationship with policymakers and the security sector. Interviewees offered various explanations for this. First, given the greater focus on "hard" security issues relative to human security issues, civil society organizations working on gender-based violence and reconciliation report being excluded from the NAP process. Second, pacifist and anti-war organizations that advocated for the NAP in the first place feel the NAP became something they had not envisioned, and that the plan has been co-opted and militarized. Many of them expected the NAP to address the legacy of war and Serbia's role in it—as aggressor as well as victim. They report that these views did not resonate with the

government, and instead, the NAP became a future-oriented document—for example, by focusing on advancing women's roles in the security sector. It has proved difficult to bridge this divide as one side argues that the other is "stuck in the 1990s" while the other suggests that the government is trying to erase that period from its policy agenda.

“We're an ex-Communist country in which organized civil society was not present. And as soon as civil society came into existence, the war [erupted], and a lot of analysts claim that this was the cause of [the] civil wars.

- Security Sector Representative

This rift is not limited to the NAP and relates to broader questions in Serbian society today: how to deal with past war crimes, whether and how to screen those in office today for involvement in the wartime regime, and how to address the root causes of conflict in Serbian society. It has also created tensions among civil society organizations working in the area of women, peace, and security. In a country where civil society developed during the war and often considers its role to be that of vocal critic rather than government collaborator, some women's groups with a more radical outlook characterize other civil society organizations as too submissive. The flipside is that other organizations may value the debate but find it hard to agree with the uncompromising approach. In other words, they suggest criticism should be communicated less aggressively to the government in order to coordinate activities on women, peace, and security. Regardless, fresh thinking is needed as more worrying challenges emerge: a growing nationalistic non-civic movement has threatened and attacked anti-war women's organizations as they have sought to address some of these questions and raise awareness about Serbian war crimes.

One side-effect of the NAP is an apparent increase in collaboration and, to a lesser extent, coordination between civil society and state institutions.

4. CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND WAYS FORWARD

Despite the challenges associated with the NAP in Serbia, it has created a forum for increased collaboration between state and civil society organizations on Resolution 1325, which is particularly visible in civil society's work with the police, military, and MoD. More policy-focused organizations and individuals are aware of Resolution 1325 as a result of the NAP process, and there is broad recognition that civil society has a significant role to play in informing the NAP's objectives and bringing them to life.

However, state and civil society representatives suggested that the initial enthusiasm associated with developing the

NAP was not sustained in the implementation phase, and implementation stalled. In addition, an institutional platform that can sustain existing dialogues and effectively coordinate implementation processes is yet to be realized. To avoid confusion and duplication of efforts, the current coordination structures for the implementation of the NAP need to be simplified; roles, decision-making responsibilities, and reporting lines clarified; and representatives of civil society included. The government could demonstrate greater political will by ensuring that dedicated financial resources are in place.

“ *Is [the NAP] financed at all? At this point, I'm not really sure.* - INGO Representative ”

The revision of the NAP now underway presents a window of opportunity for a more inclusive process. The recent public consultations for the revised NAP, which reached 250 people in six cities, is a promising step in this direction. Maintaining this momentum and improving collaboration between state and civil society actors in implementation activities will solidify the foundation for the revised NAP. Indeed, one way to reduce distrust between civil society and government is to engage civil society organizations to a greater extent as service providers who could take on specific activities as part of the implementation of the NAP.

A revised NAP could also allow for the inclusion of a broader base of stakeholders, particularly those organizations that started out as the strongest advocates for the NAP but are now among its strongest critics. While dissent is vital to any healthy democracy, these groups also have significant insights into advancing peace in a gender-sensitive manner that could strengthen the NAP and contribute to more robust policymaking for peace and security. This could be tackled from a content perspective—for example, by expanding the scope of the NAP further beyond its focus on the security sector to address more human security issues. It could also be tackled by changing the approach to engagement on both sides—for example, by nurturing nascent allies across the divide, considering new communication strategies, and (on the government's part) ensuring that there is safe civic space for engagement on a wider variety of peace and security issues. This rapprochement is in the government's interest, as it will broaden support for the NAP and allow for greater legitimacy. It is also in the interest of civil society organizations seeking to influence the NAP's direction and stay relevant as younger generations of nongovernmental organizations emerge, such as those seeking to engage young men and boys to combat violence against women and promote gender equality. Indeed, these new complementary approaches are likely to help shift broader patriarchal attitudes and could contribute to greater reconciliation.

Amid these divisions at the national level, interviewees from both government and civil society also highlighted the importance of “localizing” the NAP to a greater extent—decentralizing its implementation and including key local actors such as mayors and community elders. They suggested that individuals working at the community level have a deep



Serbian government buildings are lit in orange as part of a UN campaign to end violence against women, November 2015. Photo from UN Women.

understanding of local priorities and can find more feasible and sustainable solutions for implementing the NAP. In fact, the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders has developed guidelines for Serbia to use to localize its NAP. One particular initiative has proven quite successful in developing a local action plan in the city of Pirot. One civil society representative suggested she has been able to use the commitments made by the government in the NAP as leverage to approach local institutions and ask how they are incorporating the NAP in their work. Localization could stimulate civil society monitoring and implementation and enhance dialogue between a wider variety of stakeholders in government and civil society.

There is broad consensus on the vital role that civil society organizations have played in putting Resolution 1325 on the policy agenda in Serbia and in developing the Serbian NAP. To ensure that civil society organizations can sustain their activities on this front, access to reliable funding streams also needs to be improved. Recently, as donors have diverted funding for emergencies such as the refugee crisis in Europe or regional floods in 2014, civil society organizations have reported significant challenges in accessing funds for work on issues relating to women, peace, and security. This suggests that establishing a multi-stakeholder financing mechanism with a portion of pooled funds reserved for civil society activities on the NAP might be necessary in order to ensure this work can continue. In parallel, a costed NAP could enable both government and civil society to solicit funding for the activities in the NAP.

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SIERRA LEONE

Alexandra Amling, Brittany Persinger

Women’s activism throughout Sierra Leone’s brutal civil war (1991–2002) not only contributed to ending the conflict but also set the stage for a series of landmark gender reforms and strategies aimed at strengthening women’s rights and meaningful participation in post-conflict reconstruction. One such strategy, the National Action Plan for the Full Implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 (SiLNAP), launched in 2010; implementation activities got underway in 2012 but stalled significantly two years later with the outbreak of Ebola. Despite the plan establishing structures enhancing women’s protection and inclusion as change-makers in peace and security, women tended to be treated more as victims than leaders and mobilizers during Ebola, and rescue packages did not target them effectively. As the government called upon the military to support response efforts, women at the community level mobilized—much like during the civil war—and combatted widespread mistrust in the military by raising awareness about Ebola and its prevention, which helped to slow transmission rates. As the country continues to emerge from the crisis, talks have begun on updating the existing plan and integrating emerging challenges and lessons learned on new security threats like Ebola. In particular, stakeholders are gauging how to utilize the structures set in place by the first SiLNAP and other gender-sensitive legislation. There is also general agreement to localize the next SiLNAP more thoroughly at the district and chiefdom levels in order to build on the previous plan’s local engagement structures.

1. WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY IN SIERRA LEONE

The civil war in Sierra Leone catapulted an entire generation into armed violence and human rights violations. While the country has made great efforts in rebuilding through this post-conflict era, the 2014 Ebola virus outbreak presented a new security threat that challenged hard-fought gains, often halting them completely. The social instability related to the outbreak affected women and young girls disproportionately with high levels of gender-based violence and teenage pregnancy—often due to rape. However, despite such enormous challenges, women in Sierra Leone have been mobilizing at the community and national levels during and after the war, vigorously fighting for their rights and inclusion in decision-making processes. Interviewees suggest that women have become respected spokespersons for civil society in some communities. While only a few have so far found their way into politics and the security sector, there are signs that women’s peacebuilding activities have carried over from the desolate situation of a war-torn country into a post-Ebola era with great potential to shape peace and security in Sierra Leone.

Conflict Analysis

The 11-year armed conflict in Sierra Leone began in 1991 when Charles Taylor of Liberia used his rebel National Patriotic Front of Liberia to support the efforts of Sierra Leone’s Revolutionary United Front (RUF) to depose then-president Joseph Momoh. Three years after Momoh was ousted in a 1992 military coup, the South African private security company Executive Options was enlisted to help combat the RUF.¹ The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) also deployed troops to halt the escalating violence, with little success. Community-based militias (known as Kamajors) arose in an effort to protect civilians in eastern border regions, but often resorted to extortion and exploitation themselves.² Women in particular suffered from widespread use of sexual and gender-based violence. The civil war was declared to be over in 2002, a war in which nearly 50,000 people died, 2 million were displaced,³ and 100,000 were left mutilated.⁴

Nature of the Conflict

“Even though the war ended 15 years ago, we are still seeing spill-over effects in terms of violence against women.

- Civil Society Representative

In the years following Sierra Leone’s independence in 1961, a series of political transitions combined with corruption and fiscal mismanagement within the All People’s Congress severely impoverished the country despite its rich reserves of diamonds, gold, and other minerals.⁵ Disillusionment coupled with lack of employment and other prospects drove many young Sierra Leoneans into the RUF in the early 1990s.⁶ However, a majority of the ranks of the RUF were filled with forcibly enlisted children.⁷ By the end of 1994, the RUF had



control over all major mining sites and economic centers in the country.

At first, the RUF's objective of "freeing" Sierra Leone from the corrupt regime resonated with civil society; this changed as the rebels' struggle quickly morphed into a fight to control the country's diamond and gold mines in order to fund rebel activities, leaving civilians in the crossfire. Throughout the war, various state and non-state actors as well as external interventions (e.g. Executive Options, ECOWAS troops, British Special Forces) operated with varying degrees of success.

While the RUF was not the only armed group inflicting serious harm, 70% of reported forced marriages and incidences of sexual slavery are attributed to RUF rebels.⁸ In conjunction with heavy drug abuse,⁹ gang rape was used to enforce group cohesion by breaking family bonds and former relationships,¹⁰ and left more than 250,000 women and girls sexually abused.¹¹

Research also shows that female RUF combatants often committed violent crimes in collaboration with their male counterparts.^{12, 13} While men were the primary perpetrators during the conflict, evidence suggests that female rebels of the RUF have been implicated in some of the most vicious forms of violence.^{14, 15, 16} While they were often forced or commanded, this nonetheless underlines the varying and complex roles women played in the RUF beyond that of sex slaves and camp followers.

Peace Process

The Government of Sierra Leone and the RUF signed the Abidjan Peace Accord in 1996, which called for a neutral monitoring group, the expulsion of Executive Options, and amnesty for the rebels.¹⁷ Elections in the same year saw active participation from women (and men) across the country who viewed the elections as a means to formally establish democracy in Sierra Leone.^{18, 19} However, the government ended its contract with the Executive Options group before the accord was implemented, leaving the country in a highly volatile and insecure state without sustaining peace. The new president, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, was ultimately deposed in a 1997 military coup which reignited armed violence.²⁰

School destroyed by RUF forces. Public domain.

ECOWAS' armed monitoring group (ECOMOG) intervened after imprisoned army major Johnny Paul Koroma was named leader of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), a group of officers who aligned themselves with the RUF. ECOMOG troops drove out the rebels and reinstated President Kabbah in 1998. In 1999, after six weeks of new talks between the government and the RUF, the Lomé Peace Accord was signed, granting absolute amnesty to RUF founder Foday Sankoh and "all combatants and collaborators in respect of anything done by them in pursuit of their objectives."²¹ The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) peacekeeping mission replaced the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone with a broader mandate to monitor the agreement. A few months after the Lomé Accord was signed, RUF rebels attacked ECOMOG troops near Freetown, effectively violating the agreement. Fighting between UNAMSIL forces and rebels continued until 2001. When Sankoh was captured by government forces in May 2000,²² the RUF finally began to disintegrate²³ and its rebels were slowly demobilized. The war was officially declared over in January 2002.²⁴

“During the rebel war, when the guns were raging... women were brave in the streets and the bushes to find food for their families. So, we think women's role in the consolidation of peace is not just at the table but the day-to-day strengthening of that peace process.

- Civil Society Representative

During the war, women had negotiated with rebel leaders as early as 1995, but often to no avail and at great personal risk.²⁵ During the high-level peace talks in Lomé, only three women (two with the government delegation, one with the rebel delegation) were present among the 20 delegates.²⁶ None were included in the drafting and signing stages, nor did the agreement contain gender provisions,^{27, 28} which is particularly egregious in view of the central role women played in conflict resolution, as well as the high level of sexual violence committed against the female population during the conflict.

Post-conflict Justice and Reconciliation

The 1999 Lomé Peace Accord laid the groundwork for the establishment of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation



Commission (TRC). Article XXVI mandated the development of a space for victims as well as perpetrators to address human rights violations occurring since the outbreak of conflict in 1991,²⁹ and led to a demand for an “unequivocal apology to women for the violence they suffered during the war and the impunity” of the perpetrators,³⁰ which was not offered until 2014 by current president Ernest Bai Koroma. Examining the root causes and outcome of the armed conflict,³¹ the TRC drafted a report with concluding recommendations (e.g., inclusion of women and youth in political decision-making processes, fighting against corruption, tighter control over security forces, etc.) in 2004, which the National Commission for Social Action was tasked with implementing.³²

The RUF’s violation of the Lomé agreement led to the establishment of the Sierra Leone Special Court in The Hague in 2002,³³ but this court would only prosecute crimes committed across all armed groups after the first agreement of 1996.³⁴ The hybrid nature of the court localized international legal frameworks,³⁵ making the prosecution of sexual gender-based violence (SGBV) a high priority. It was the first war crimes tribunal to find forced marriage to be a crime against humanity.³⁶

Women’s Participation in Peace and Security

As occurs in any conflict or period of insecurity, women in Sierra Leone took on a variety of roles during both the civil war and the Ebola crisis. Hundreds of thousands of women and girls suffered abuse at the hands of armed groups, and the rate of SGBV throughout the conflict fed the dominant narrative of women’s victimhood rather than agency. Yet, in spite of bearing the brunt of human rights violations, women’s peace activism and mobilization sent strong messages to conflict leaders and resulted in the formation of strong women’s groups which exist to this day.³⁷ For example, the Women’s Forum, a coalition of women’s groups hoping to leverage their civil society presence as an important constituency seeking to end the conflict, was founded in the lead-up to the 1995 UN World Conference on Women in Beijing. Another group, the Sierra Leone Women’s Movement for Peace, built connections between women with different religious and political backgrounds to form a stronger movement.³⁸

“*To talk with the rebels, we went just as [women]—with our words, with power to negotiate—to convince the warring factions to say, ‘No, we’ve had enough of this. Can we now sit?’ Because we weren’t making any gain as Sierra Leoneans.*” — Government Representative

In 1999, women took to the streets and demanded an end to hostilities as a response to the AFRC/RUF government actions that had caused the country to plunge back into conflict. In 2000, a group of elderly women took matters into their hands; they “hitched up their skirts, bent over, and bared themselves” in front of Foday Sankoh’s house in Freetown.³⁹ This culturally

significant form of shaming and insult led to mass mobilization of civil society.⁴⁰ Emboldened by their activism throughout the war, many women stood for election in the country’s first post-war parliamentary election in 2002 and the first local elections after 32 years in 2004.

Women and girls also served as rebels, though it is almost impossible to determine their exact numbers.⁴¹ Estimates of the total percentage, across all armed groups, of participants who were female (participating voluntarily and otherwise) range from between 30% to 50%.⁴² According to one source, out of 10,000 women associated with the RUF, 9,500 (roughly 93%⁴³) are said to have been abducted or donated by relatives.⁴⁴

Despite the high female participation rate, the majority of female rebels were excluded from the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs in 1998–2002.⁴⁵ Approximately 5,000 women and 500 girls officially registered for the DDR programs, a disproportionately small number relative to the approximately 70,000 men and 7,000 boys who participated.⁴⁶ It led to what one researcher called the “exclusive programming [that] denies agency on the part of women during the war.”⁴⁷ In addition, many girls with children were disqualified from those DDR programs that targeted child soldiers because as mothers, they were not considered children anymore.⁴⁸ Equally problematic has been the stigma against ex-combatants, rape victims, and so-called bush wives. Considered an “extension of their [rebel] husbands,” bush wives have been shunned by some communities,⁴⁹ but conceding to forced marriage was often the only way for many women and girls to avoid gang rape.⁵⁰

The recent outbreak of Ebola in Sierra Leone should be viewed from a women, peace, and security framework. Pandemics were not mentioned in Resolution 1325, but one of the key drivers behind the resolution was a desire to expand the understanding of security beyond traditional “hard” security issues to incorporate a human-security-centric approach. Not unlike situations of armed conflict, epidemics aggravate existing tensions and insecurity, and can cause a governance vacuum that leaves women and girls vulnerable to gender-based violence.⁵¹ Many interviewees perceived the Ebola outbreak to have been worse than the civil war.

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Before being contained in mid-2015 (with a brief flare-up in January 2016), Ebola killed nearly 4,000 people and devastated the country’s already struggling economy.⁵² Sex-disaggregated data on the gendered impact of Ebola, generally, is limited; in February 2015, cumulative data put the number of women who contracted the disease at 52%,⁵³ or 4,151 cases.⁵⁴ However, while gender disparity has been observed across all impacted countries, there is a dearth of statistics that specify



A bus in Freetown. Photo by Alexandra Amling.

how many women died or survived in comparison to men.^{55, 56, 57} United Nations Children’s Fund suspects that across the region, women’s casualties amount to 50% to 60% of the total.⁵⁸ The chronic disrepair of health centers⁵⁹ contributed to the speed of infection, as did gender-specific factors such as the customary burial practices in which women are in charge of preparing bodies for interment. Due to their traditional caregiving roles, women tended to be at greater risk for infection.⁶⁰

In spite of the stigma against Ebola survivors and volunteers, women’s participation in Ebola response eventually became essential in changing community behavior. Their work with burial teams facilitated negotiations with families to release dead bodies and, at the same time, helped to sensitize communities on adequate handling of Ebola.^{61, 62, 63} In 2014, UN Security Council Resolution 2217 expressly called for women’s involvement in Ebola response mechanisms.⁶⁴

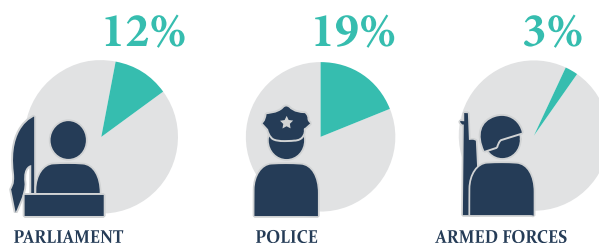
Women’s groups strengthened their advocacy efforts in spite of limited financial resources. The Women’s Response to Ebola in Sierra Leone campaign was formed in July 2014 by a coalition of individuals and groups “to contribute to and complement government’s efforts to fight against” Ebola.⁶⁵ Among other things, it recommended establishing “an Advisory Board...to the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response, to address the gender dimension of EVD [Ebola Virus Disease].”⁶⁶ As a follow-up to the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists’ Yellow Ribbon Campaign, female journalists from Women in the Media Sierra Leone launched their own campaign titled “Getting Ebola to Zero and Staying at Zero,”⁶⁷ which recognized the roles of youth and women in defeating the disease. An equally positive outcome for women was the revelation that the cultural practice of female genital mutilation contributes

to the spread of the disease, which helped accelerate the official prohibition of mutilation.⁶⁸ As such, while Ebola hindered the implementation of the SiLNAP and put women at higher risk, women’s contributions highlighted the continuum of their peacebuilding activism in Sierra Leone, and opened new pathways for the upcoming revision of the SiLNAP.⁶⁹

Gender Dynamics

Sierra Leone ranks 145th out of 154 countries on the UN Development Programme’s Gender Inequality Index, which measures reproductive health, empowerment, and economic status in countries with available data.⁷⁰ The country fares similarly to neighbors Liberia (rank 146) and Ivory Coast (rank 151).⁷¹ Women currently comprise 12.4% of Sierra Leone’s parliament⁷² and 18.9% of local government leaders. In March 2016, 11 women were appointed to key cabinet positions for the first time in history: 4 as ministers, 5 as deputies, and 2 as ambassadors.⁷³ Former Minister of Health and Sanitation Zainab Hawa Bangura became the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict in September 2012. She added priority on national ownership of solutions combatting SGBV, and has spoken numerous times on the equal role females have as stakeholders in peace and security.

PROPORTION OF WOMEN



In the security sector, women make up 19% of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP), with three holding the rank of Assistant Inspector General.⁷⁴ Sierra Leone has thereby almost met the global target set by the UN Police Division of having 20% of the police force be female. Approximately 3% of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) are women. Brigadier General Kestoria Kabia became West Africa’s first female brigadier in 2008. While no servicewomen currently hold the rank of colonel or major general, Brigadier General Kabia is working with civil society to mainstream gender in the armed forces and to encourage targeted recruitment of young women, a goal shared by current president Koroma. In a February 2016 address in honor of Armed Forces Day, he stated that “opportunities are also being created for women to be enlisted both as officers and other ranks so that they will be able to compete with their male counterparts”⁷⁵ to decrease the RSLAF’s gender gap.

Currently, Sierra Leone is among the top ten countries contributing police to UN peacekeeping missions.⁷⁶ As of 2014, 37 women had been trained for the African Union Mission in Somalia peace support operation.⁷⁷ A subsequent batch of 850 peacekeeping personnel (with 65 women)⁷⁸ was halted due to the Ebola outbreak that started in 2013.⁷⁹

“*We are 14 out of the whole parliament of 124... So, if we look at the impact we can actually create here, it is also minimal.* - Government Representative

While general attitudes toward women’s inclusion and empowerment appear to be gradually changing, different forms of victimization and inequality persist. The occurrence of violence against women and girls today is arguably a “legacy” of violence inflicted during the war and during and immediately following the Ebola outbreak.⁸⁰ According to a recent study on teenage pregnancy in the aftermath of Ebola, there is an indication that the war eroded “cultural values and social mores that had previously dissuaded early sexual activity”; this weakening of the social fabric combined with the unrest and instability in Ebola’s wake facilitated the increase in teenage pregnancy rates throughout the crisis,^{81, 82} likely caused by an increase in incidences of rape.⁸³ While the war and Ebola are both over, the impacts of these factors will linger for generations.

The occurrence of violence against women and girls today is arguably a “legacy” of violence inflicted during the war and during and immediately following the Ebola outbreak.

Existing Legal Framework

Gender equality is widely acknowledged as “the catalyst for development.”⁸⁴ The government signed and ratified the Convention to End All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1988, and Article 27 of the 1991 Constitution, amended in 2001, provides for equality between men and women. Sierra Leone is also a signatory to the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, and the Beijing Platform for Action, among many others.⁸⁵ As a UN member state, Sierra Leone is also obliged to implement Resolution 1325 and the other eight resolutions of the women, peace, and security agenda.⁸⁶ To that end, the 2010 National Action Plan for the Full Implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 built upon a series of existing laws. These include (but are not limited to) the Gender Mainstreaming Policy and the National Policy on the Advancement of Women in 2000 (the primary foundation for Sierra Leone’s existing gender policy framework⁸⁷), the 2005 Anti-Human Trafficking Act, the 2007 Child Rights Act, and a suite of “Gender Justice Laws” in 2007 (the Domestic Violence Act, the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act,

and the Devolution of Estates Act), and the 2009 National Gender Strategic Plan. The Sexual Offences Act in 2012 further fleshed out the government’s commitments to combatting gender-based violence.

In addition to government policies, gender equality and anti-sexual-violence initiatives exist across the security sector. One such mechanism is the police’s Family Support Units (FSU), established in the late 1990s⁸⁸ to investigate crimes against women and children. As of 2015, 62 FSUs were operating in the country.⁸⁹ However, according to a member of the SLP, the capacity of FSUs is often very limited in both subject-matter knowledge and finances. This was echoed by a parliamentarian who suggested that Sierra Leone ought to instead consider the model of the one-stop service centers that have been established in Rwanda. Victims of sexual violence in Sierra Leone are being asked to pay fees for medical reports, contrary to the Domestic Violence Act. Impunity for sexually violent offenders continues to impede legal procedures, and prosecution rates remain low.⁹⁰ While implementation might be slow, provisions for women’s rights and access demonstrate that various laws in Sierra Leone are linked to implementing Resolutions 1325 and 1820, as interviewees reported.

2. THE SIERRA LEONE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY

| SIERRA LEONE’S NATIONAL ACTION PLAN | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 2010-2014 | |
| HOSTED BY: | The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children’s Affairs |
| BUDGET ESTIMATE: | US \$21,301,314 |
| FOCAL AREAS: | Sexual and gender-based violence |
| | Women’s and girls’ rights and protection |
| | Prosecution of perpetrators |
| | Participation in decision-making |
| | Monitoring and evaluation |

SIERRA LEONE

From a regional perspective, West Africa is a leader on NAP development; 12 of Africa’s 19 current NAP countries are West African, at the time of writing. Furthermore, the Mano River Union (MRU) bloc—Sierra Leone, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, and Liberia—were the only ECOWAS countries with NAPs preceding ECOWAS’ own action plan in 2010, which was built on the Dakar Declaration on the implementation of Resolution 1325. The main focus of the ECOWAS action plan centers on women’s meaningful participation in peace processes and protection from violence against women and girls, as well as prevention.⁹¹

“ [SiLNAP] takes on board everything: peace time, war time, and whatever situation. I see it as the main document for development in Sierra Leone. Especially for the advancement of women.

- Government Representative ”

The Mano River Women’s Peace Network in particular was a driving force behind the promotion of women’s participation in conflict management and mitigation.⁹² The four countries’ NAPs, therefore, became important tools each country could use to protect women and highlight their voices in decision-making. Apart from sharing experiences of conflict and insecurity, including the Ebola pandemic, the MRU has implemented collective strategies for post-Ebola socio-economic recovery⁹³ and partnered with the UN Population Fund on cross-border issues.⁹⁴

Development and Implementation of the National Action Plan

The process to develop the Sierra Leone National Action Plan to Implement UNSCRs 1325 and 1820 (SiLNAP) began in 2008 and was set against the backdrop of the atrocities committed during the civil war, and aimed to promote gender equality in Sierra Leone’s efforts at post-conflict transformation.⁹⁵ The government and civil society as well as women’s groups worked together closely in a joint task force which conducted a mapping activity prior to drafting the NAP in order to establish a baseline view of all Resolution 1325-related programs and activities in Sierra Leone. In particular, the survey helped identify knowledge gaps and establish priority areas for the SiLNAP.⁹⁶ Reflecting on this exercise and the needs and concerns of women in Sierra Leone, the plan focused predominantly on the issue of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls during the conflict. President Koroma’s presence at

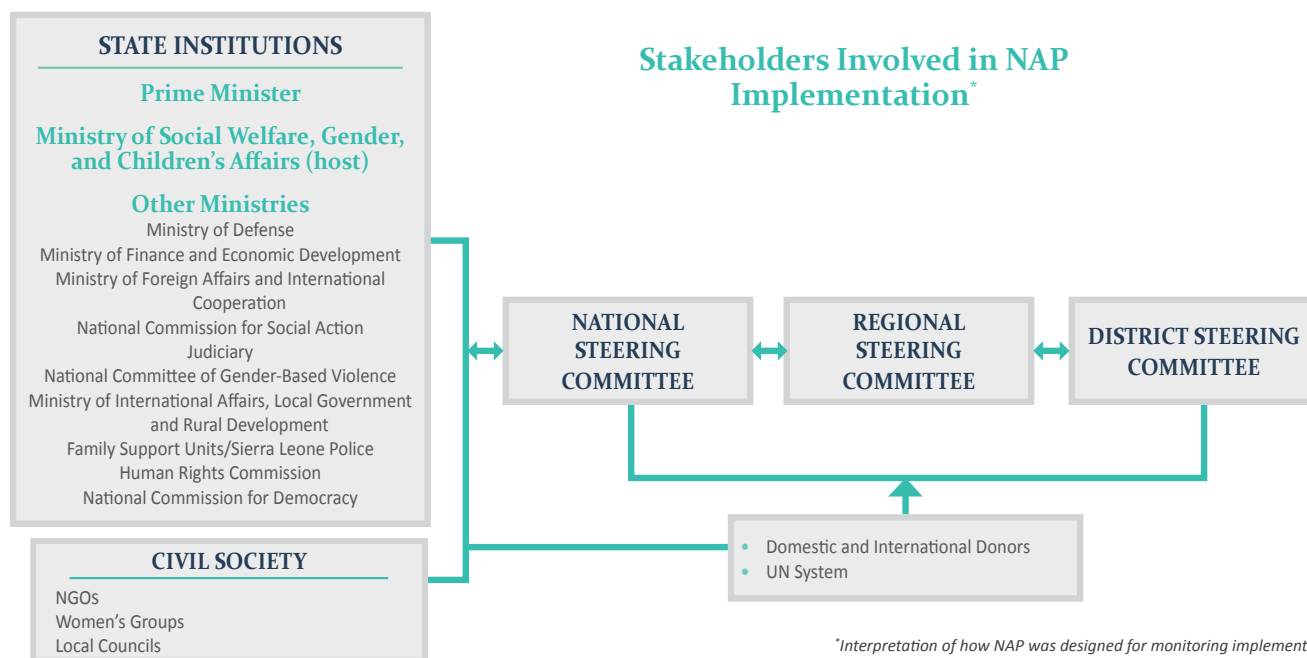
the 2010 launch of the document was perceived by many to be a demonstration of **political will** to implement the principles of the SiLNAP. However, as with many policies and laws in Sierra Leone, the stated commitment did not always translate into real implementation, with the caveat that Ebola shut down almost the entire administration of the government.

“ SiLNAP was developed in light of our challenges in Sierra Leone... In light of our past experience, in light of social, political, and cultural challenges women are facing, the NAP was developed to respond... And it is a very good instrument, complementing other laws.” - INGO Representative ”

Nonetheless, women’s groups have consistently engaged government agencies and helped to develop gender policies and guidelines. The SLP in particular has been working closely with female civil society representatives to draft gender-sensitive policies. Chief among them are the 2008 Gender Mainstreaming and Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment Policies and the creation of a Gender Unit “tasked with making the institution [the SLP] more gender-responsive through the mainstreaming of gender in all policies, programs and projects.”⁹⁷ The RSLAF also produced a Gender Training Manual in 2010, again in close cooperation with women’s organizations, because “the concept [of gender issues] is fairly new to the RSLAF.”⁹⁸ While these activities are not directly linked to the development and implementation of the SiLNAP, these policies and guidelines indicate a progressive engagement of women’s groups with the government, which eventually led to the drafting of the SiLNAP itself.

This process of development was notably **inclusive and well-coordinated**. The joint government–civil society task force was very active and operated at the national, provincial, and district levels during the mapping exercise. One government

SIERRA LEONE



representative also stated that although activities were halted in 2014 until late 2015, several task force groups were able to support a recent external review of the implementation of the plan, supported by UN Women, and worked closely with the steering committee.

Mobilizing resources and building momentum for the SiLNAP can be attributed to many different civil society organizations and women's groups. Many lay claim to the actual drafting of the plan, but interviews indicate that the process overall was driven by a variety of stakeholders with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MoSWGCA) as the leading government institution. In fact, one respondent stated that the MoSWGCA was best equipped to coordinate all efforts pertaining to the plan in order to avoid duplication and identify areas that have been left out because the ministry itself is not an agency that directly implements activities listed in the SiLNAP.



Development and good governance are derived from an empowered population; they must understand policy and use that knowledge to demand accountability.

- Civil Society Representative



While it is difficult to assess from this research how much further the implementation process could have developed without the outbreak of the Ebola pandemic, it is clear from the interviews that the initial dynamic for the implementation of the plan has faded away over time, and government priorities have shifted since 2014. Inherent in shifting agendas and funds because of Ebola is the transformation of alliances and partnerships between government and civil society and among civil society groups. In other words, some organizations worked more closely with government than others and were able to access a new pool of international funding while the others have been more at the receiving end of the process. Part of that problem is that in their "quest for survival," some groups reportedly became very attached to the government and political parties, and were not perceived as being civil society organizations anymore.

Such dynamics are unfortunate but not uncommon. Fighting for resources had been a problem for many NGOs in Sierra Leone even prior to the outbreak of Ebola. However, this aspect should not gloss over the fact that the task force built a strong network among different state and non-state actors. The efforts of this multi-stakeholder group supported the development of a comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Framework with detailed budgets that identified external funding sources for each activity. The task force has since transitioned into a National Steering Committee⁹⁹ and is charged with effectively implementing and **monitoring** the action plan. This form of a coordination body was envisioned under Pillar 5 of the action plan ("Promote Coordination of the Implementation Process, including Resource Mobilization, Monitoring and Evaluation of and Reporting on the National Action Plan")¹⁰⁰ and is led by the MoSWGCA.

Much can be said about the positive aspects of the development phase of the SiLNAP, but less about the implementation. Many women's groups and civil society organizations continue their work on women, peace, and security independently, with many being reportedly unaware that their activities are directly linked to the action plan. A similar trend is evident in several government agencies, especially in the districts where commitment for women's issues in peace and security is arguably high, but awareness of the SiLNAP seemed limited. This is partly due to structural problems such as illiteracy and a proliferation of local languages that make it difficult to reach every corner of Sierra Leone. Short-staffed and underfunded local civil society organizations and government offices obviously have limited capacity to provide workshops or other forums for popularization purposes. On top of that, the media did not receive the funds necessary to raise awareness about the SiLNAP, although the media is highlighted in the SiLNAP as playing a pivotal role in this regard.¹⁰¹

Part of the problem is that roles and responsibilities within the National Steering Committee are not clearly defined and understood by all stakeholders. Many respondents suggested that the MoSWGCA should be taking the lead on in-country monitoring activities, rather than only coordinating and relying on data collection and analysis from civil society organizations. Yet, this runs counter to what MoSWGCA considers its role to be. Not only limited in its capacity both financially and in terms of human resources, MoSWGCA regrettably does not understand its role as the entity needing to conduct and produce a monitoring report. Rather, the ministry feels it can assist "if they [civil society] have bottlenecks in accessing data, information from government institutions...to ensure that these institutions comply with providing adequate information...to assess as to where we are." Currently, women's groups and other civil society organizations working on women's issues produce their own shadow reporting, but without proper data collection mechanisms in place, these reports often draw on old data and tend to be less consistent in their assessments. In addition, few have been able to monitor the objectives and outcomes of the SiLNAP itself.



There was a budget but the government should have adopted it. We wanted local government officials to ensure that activities for the National Action Plan were in the budgets.

- Women's Rights Activist



Equally problematic is the **financing** aspect of the SiLNAP. The detailed budget associated with each cost "does not clearly identify the government's specific responsibilities or provide particular targets in budgetary allocations."¹⁰² This has led to an obvious disconnect between what civil society and the MoSWGCA perceive each other's roles to be. Considering the magnitude of the issues the MoSWGCA is expected to tackle, its annual budget is clearly inadequate. It is the government's least-funded ministry, reportedly receiving approximately 0.02% of the national budget. This situation has led many women's organizations to question



Women gather at the YWCA in Freetown. Photo by Alexandra Amling.

the sincerity of the government's commitment to the gender ministry, let alone the NAP, although it is important to note here that the budget allocation of the SiLNAP did not specify "the sources of funding" aside from anticipated contributions from "multilaterals..., bilaterals..., the private sector, NGOs, and government agencies."¹⁰³ Many representatives from civil society and women's groups hoped that with the introduction of a costed SiLNAP, government agencies would press for activities relevant to their sectors (e.g., the Ministry of Justice would implement activities under the Prosecution pillar) as a point of leverage to request increases in their annual budget allocations.

Another feature of the NAP that has led to growing frustration is the role multilateral bodies play. As one civil society representative put it, "The UN agencies...push for certain things but they don't support us in the end. There has to be a systematic way of supporting these activities." In other words, while many resources go into technical assistance, fewer, if any, resources go into the implementation, even though that should be an integral part of the process.

Impact of the National Action Plan

Based on interviewee responses, knowledge of the SiLNAP is generally less common than awareness of Resolution 1325 among key actors; however, participants in both government and civil society cited the SiLNAP as a key reason for the increased Resolution 1325 awareness, with one respondent reflecting it was "the result of the [SiLNAP] development process itself." Many interviewees also suggested that the SiLNAP was used along with Resolution 1325 as an accountability tool for both the government and for individuals to contribute to a peaceful society. On the

topic of popularization, however, responses were more mixed, especially between interviewees based in Freetown and those based in more rural communities. One official emphasized the fact that the SiLNAP had been popularized at the regional, national, and local levels and actually helped them into a position from which to promote the SiLNAP and the women, peace, and security agenda even further; another specifically criticized those actors that assumed simply printing and distributing the SiLNAP among stakeholders at all levels meant the document would actually be read. Despite many in Freetown discussing how extensively the SiLNAP had been popularized at the local level, compliance with Gender Acts and the SiLNAP has not been as strong at the local level due to structural issues such as illiteracy and diverse local languages and the limited capacity of short-staffed, underfunded local implementing agencies.

In the years since the SiLNAP launched in 2010, rates of women's inclusion in government and the security sector have generally increased, though numbers from 2014 and 2015 suggest the Ebola outbreak may have negatively affected these gains. For example, in the military, rates of female participation in junior officer ranks increased from 5% in 2012 to 6% in 2013, but fell to 4% in 2014.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, women's political participation at the national level rose from 11% in 2010 to 13% in 2014,¹⁰⁵ but has decreased slightly to 12% since then, perhaps due to mobility constraints during Ebola. Of course, it is difficult to attribute rising participation rates solely to the SiLNAP. For example, in the case of security sector reform, one civil society representative pointed out that "Resources have been dedicated to lift up [the] security sector" since the war and include women from the beginning in gender mainstreaming efforts, and not just by increasing their numbers.

“*If you look at SiLNAP, two of five main objectives include prevention and protection. On the prevention issue, we recruit men in the communities we work with as 'role models.' If I had resources, I'd replicate this across the country: get 5 men out of every village and at all levels, and then you've reduced the number of men who could perpetrate SGBV.* - INGO Representative

Another challenge to attribution is the fact that much of Sierra Leone's existing gender policy framework and key protection mechanisms (such as the police force's Family Support Units) existed prior to the SiLNAP. For instance, increased reporting of sexual violence and rape to FSUs demonstrates that laws and associated punishment are more widely known throughout Sierra Leone, but it is unclear whether the protection and prevention elements of the SiLNAP were what directly contributed to the increased reporting, as opposed to other policies. This increased reporting also has not fully translated into convictions.¹⁰⁶ However, this clearly shows that the Ministry of Justice, for example, is actively trying to enforce

laws pertaining to sexual and gender-based violence. Based on the research findings, these efforts, again, are not linked to objectives in the SiLNAP, indicating lack of coordination and communication. In fact, one respondent suggested that the developers of the SiLNAP set targets without proper analysis of the actual capacity and resources of the implementing agencies. Developments in the justice sector are not monitored closely and captured by the lead agency for the implementation of the action plan. As a result, reporting on the plan is limited at best. The influence of the SiLNAP under these circumstances is thus contested by some as being minor, and is considered essential by others.

However, interviews with the police and the military both indicate that there has been closer collaboration between the security sector and civil society as well as women's groups since the development of the SiLNAP. Representatives of the security sector who are members of the National Steering Committee and the founder of the 50/50 group have been consulting the SLP under a joint project with the United Nations Development Programme to increase gender awareness among the national police. Similar joint efforts are less prevalent in the military because of persistent negative attitudes toward women and also because of the shortage of funding for any gender-related initiatives. Interviews indicated that there is less political will to reform the military than the national police. Stipulations on targeted recruitment of educated women for higher ranks into the sector, specifically highlighting the RSLAF,¹⁰⁷ are problematic as long as opportunities for women are limited and the chain of command inhibits capacity-building initiatives by the Gender Units. Compounded by high unemployment in the country and limited educational opportunities for young women, some argue that the military is running the risk of becoming a "dumping ground for women" within the lower ranks.

Having more women in the police and the military is perceived as being a way to encourage women to come forward and report abuse.

One indication for the difference is the SLP's efforts to achieve the 20% mark of female participation in the police force set by the UN, and for Sierra Leone to become a major contributing country to peacekeeping missions. In both cases, the existence of the SiLNAP was stated to be an important advocacy tool and a way to highlight the importance of security as it pertains to women and peace.

While the SiLNAP itself does not focus primarily on increasing the number of women in the security sector but rather on protection and prevention of violence against women and girls, interviews in both Freetown and rural communities suggested that security is a major area of concern for many women. Sexual and gender-based violence are still very prevalent and vulnerabilities associated with insecurity were again demonstrated during the outbreak of Ebola, as evidenced by the high rates of rape and teenage pregnancy. Thus, having more women in the police and the military is perceived as



President of 50/50 Group, Aisha Ibrahim. Photo by Alexandra Amling.

being a way to encourage women to come forward and report abuse. The deployment of the military during the Ebola pandemic also shows that for any emergency, the military has to be trained on the gender-specific needs of men, women, and children in a state of crisis. The presence of the security sector in the National Steering Committee in that case is key, especially in light of the upcoming discussion on revising the action plan.

It is clear that commitment to the implementation from key stakeholders is high; funding such activities, on the other hand, continues to be a major problem. The identification of potential donors as outlined in the action plan was not entirely successful; a representative of the MoSWGCA stated that the engagement with the private sector, identified as a key potential source of SiLNAP funding, failed to bear any fruit. Shortages in funding are problematic for all sectors, and the aforementioned redirection of funds for Ebola response have drained most government resources. At this stage, it is difficult to assess what the donor landscape will look like in post-Ebola Sierra Leone. However, the research findings indicate that the revision process will use a lessons-learned approach that from the outlook is going to be very inclusive again. There is a recognized need for more national political will on gender-related issues that goes beyond verbal commitments, as well as a need for greater awareness on the part of the international community regarding the importance of peace and security not just for women but for communities at large.

3. COLLABORATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY

There was consensus among interviewees that the relationship between the government and civil society has been good. The Gender Department of the MoSWGCA has been very active in working closely with civil society organizations and the security sector from the start. While representatives of the security sector criticized the selective process by which members are invited on



Representatives of civil society in Sierra Leone. UN Photo by Eskinder Debebe.

an as-needed basis, cooperation has transcended traditional boundaries. The research findings suggest that civil society organizations and women's groups have been most effective when they have worked in tandem with both government agencies and the security sector to ensure peace in Sierra Leone prevails by monitoring, implementing, and improving the existing system of laws and policies put in place. These efforts are more prevalent for activities in Freetown, where civil society and women's groups have greater access to both donors and state institutions. Local groups operate on much smaller budgets and often rely on volunteer work. Based on the findings of this study, these locally based organizations often coordinate with local government agencies to ensure activities are not duplicated. In most cases, local organizations supplement the work the local government is unable to carry out either because of bureaucratic obstacles, lack of knowledge and capacity, or weak funding.

“ *I really think that we need to re-energize civil society. We need a stronger civil society who can push [government] to act, especially as we're going closer to elections. If they push us, they will act. But we need that commitment from civil society.* - Government Representative ”

Reflecting on these shortcomings in making the action plan more locally relevant, the government in 2014 held a workshop with the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders to introduce the 2013 guidelines for localization of the SiLNAP. As part of this process, local steering committees were to be established to work in tandem with the National Steering Committee. The MoSWGCA and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development were made the leading government agencies. The Office of the President launched the guidelines, thereby

signaling high-level support for streamlining particular priorities of the SiLNAP in local council development plans. Currently, the initiative is only being implemented in the southern and eastern regions of Sierra Leone. A visit to Moyomba District indicated that structural issues such as poverty and attitudes toward women are a major problem. Civil society representatives narrated instances in which the FSU was unable to deliver or female police officers were reluctant to intervene. But most agreed that gender-sensitivity trainings provided by local organizations, such as the Office for Inclusive Development, have helped to bridge this gap. Also, Moyomba District is well-known for strong women's organizations and activism, and it was able to recover from Ebola faster than other regions in Sierra Leone. The World Health Organization and civil society representatives explained that communities with higher participation of women had stronger conflict prevention structures such as early warning systems. According to interviewees, these communities were able to communicate new cases of infection to the authorities faster, and response mechanisms took effect in a more coordinated way to prevent further spread of the virus.

In addition, there are still very few initiatives to include men in the struggle for more gender equality and women's empowerment. The United Nations Population Fund has helped set up a male advocacy group, and the Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law offers sensitization programs for men. The common denominator of these initiatives centers around the idea that service provision and awareness-raising need to be inclusive in order to have long-term impact. One example is that access to treatment of sexual diseases for women alone will not have any impact if men are not treated and trained equally. With regard to male support in different state institutions, several stakeholders pointed to a growing number of men in support of increasing women in leadership

and decision-making positions and the need to learn more on gender laws and their relevance for society at large.

Most government officials agreed that women’s rights advances rely on a strong, united women’s movement that sustains demands on authorities, monitors implementation, and holds authorities to account.

In order to have stronger influence with regard to the NAP, civil society organizations and women’s groups need to start rethinking their strategies and priorities. While funding is a persistent problem for many of these organizations, one respondent pointed out that civil society as a whole needs to become more active again in coordinating their activities on women, peace, and security. The common denominator that brought many groups together in the late 1990s and early 2000s was the intent to domesticate Resolutions 1325 and 1820. The momentum has arguably died down because of Ebola, but some women’s groups are said to have become more complacent in their positions than others as their connections to government agencies and international donors are quite strong. This is all the more problematic as most government officials agreed that women’s rights advances rely on a strong, united women’s movement that sustains demands on authorities, monitors implementation, and holds authorities to account. In fact, many of the gender-related laws would not have been passed if women and other civil society groups had not jointly advocated for them. Regaining this momentum which led to the development of the SiLNAP in the first place will be challenging, but there are many structures in place to move forward with a new action plan to advance the role of women in peace and security.

“*If we do a lot on empowering girls and making them feel that they belong, giving them assurance that they are capable, it will make empowerment easier for women. If you invest in their education, as our parents invested in us, you will reap the benefits.* - Women’s Rights Activist”

4. CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND WAYS FORWARD

The SiLNAP is built on an extensive body of existing legislation which the SiLNAP has revived and reinforced. While quantitative data is not sufficient, qualitative data indicates that the SiLNAP led to an increase in collaboration, helped to supplement existing legislation, and supported the development of gender-sensitive policies within the security sector. However, the Ebola crisis showed that the SiLNAP failed to properly institutionalize principles of gender-responsive situation analysis and accounting for women’s roles in decision-making processes. In fact, it needed another resolution (UNSCR 2217) to highlight the need for women’s inclusion and their positive contributions to Ebola response

and prevention. In addition, civil society and state actors pointed to the inconsistencies with which activities that are clearly linked to the objectives of the action plan are being executed without being monitored and evaluated against the action plan. While the National Steering Committee is an extension of the women’s movement for greater inclusion in peace and security that has been taking place since the late 1990s, their weak ability to effectively coordinate activities on women, peace, and security by different stakeholders has been a major obstacle in operationalizing the SiLNAP effectively.

Nonetheless, the action plan provides a platform to engage relevant line ministries, which could be utilized more productively. Sierra Leone is a different place than when women came together during and after the war to domesticate Resolutions 1325 and 1820. Without neglecting the pillars on which the women, peace, and security agenda sits, many stakeholders agreed that the next national action plan has to be more responsive to local needs and unexpected crises. For example, dealing with Ebola in 2014 and 2015 raised the question of to what extent the health sector needs to be involved more directly on issues regarding women in peace and security. In particular, the SiLNAP opens pathways to communicate the much-needed transition from a traditional security focus to a human-centered approach to security. There is already a trend in the security sector, but the inclusion of other line ministries can certainly put more emphasis on and engender cross-collaboration in times of emergency and beyond.

“*I think, in terms of terrorism—and when you consider that Sierra Leone is sending peacekeepers [abroad]—we should have a preparedness plan for any eventuality. You don’t wait until it comes.* - Women’s Rights Activist”

In fact, Sierra Leone and other countries in the region are well aware of emerging security threats, such as those posed by the violent extremist group Boko Haram. While the group is still more confined to Nigeria and its immediate neighbors, some stakeholders in Sierra Leone recognize the need to have a contingency plan in order to better prepare people for any threat or incident. This awareness also signifies a step closer to greater regional cooperation. ECOWAS has its own NAP, and regional dialogues regarding more secure borders have opened pathways to more dialogue among member states to better coordinate the establishment of effective early warning systems as outlined in the ECOWAS action plan. Women’s inclusion in these efforts is considered essential; according to the MRU chapter in Sierra Leone, they have anecdotal evidence that women’s participation in border areas has led to greater awareness of Resolution 1325 itself and recognition of women’s role in building and maintaining peace in communities.

As such, Sierra Leoneans are not only learning from each other but are also integrating lessons learned from their neighbors to strengthen their NAP. As a regional framework, the ECOWAS

action plan facilitates this exchange. The same cannot be said for other legal frameworks established by the African Union, such as the Maputo Protocol, which is spelling out the rights of women under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Sierra Leone ratified the Maputo Protocol in 2015, but interviewees indicated that the UN and the African Union mechanisms are implemented in isolation with too much disconnect.

Inadequate financing mechanisms are another major challenge. The current national development strategy, the "Agenda for Prosperity," promotes the support for all gender equality plans in Sierra Leone under its Pillar 8, including the SiLNAP with the caveat that there is a "gap in terms of resource allocation and commitment to the implementation of the Action Plan." The document offers no insights as to how the government will address the financial shortcomings; some interviewees contest that Pillar 8 does not have the necessary ingredients to further women's empowerment. Equally difficult is the short-term nature of the projects of international organizations and inter-governmental bodies. After the civil war, many externally financed programs and projects have failed to have a long-term impact because the initiatives were not linked to building capacity and enabling environments. One respondent alluded to the fact that incoming executives and their staffs often lack experience and the insights to drive post-conflict processes. In the end, Sierra Leone is still a fragile state in which, according to one representative, insecurities in terms of gang activities and gender-based violence have intensified in recent months because, according to him, the root causes of the conflict, as identified in the TRC, have not been adequately addressed.

After the civil war, many externally financed programs and projects have failed to have a long-term impact because the initiatives were not linked to building capacity and enabling environments.

In particular, there are lingering anxieties regarding the potential radicalization of youth, especially since almost an entire generation of children during the 1990s did not receive education and were exposed to atrocious acts of violence and drug abuse. Sierra Leone has a disproportionately high percentage of youth, particularly women and girls. The labor market currently can hardly absorb a new generation of educated Sierra Leoneans, let alone the mass of young men and women with low skill and education levels who have witnessed and/or participated in the conflict. For female-headed households, this is particularly difficult. Not only are victims of sexual violence and HIV/AIDS-infected people ostracized, but their children are equally stigmatized. Trapped in that vicious cycle, early sex and teenage pregnancy remain quite prevalent in Sierra Leone, as mentioned. Equally problematic is the high level of violence against women in areas where demobilized men and boys relocated after the war. Without proper means of income and with a perceived lack of power, "ex-combatants often felt the need to assert their authority in new ways." Youth development should therefore



Ebola treatment centre run by Medecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) in Magburaka, Sierra Leone, December 2014. UN Photo by Martine Perret.

be more prioritized in the new SiLNAP as members of different women's and peacebuilding groups have suggested. Some are already trying to adjust their activities and identify ways in which young girls and women can be even more protected but simultaneously empowered. Many stakeholders agree that a revised SiLNAP needs to reflect this demographic reality, as the current SiLNAP only mentions the age structure of Sierra Leone without going into deeper analysis of how this portion of the total population can be effectively targeted.

“ You cannot send women to peace negotiations if they can only read and write... We should mentor the young women. - Security Sector Representative ”

Looking ahead, the revision of the SiLNAP presents a window of opportunity to address many of these challenges. Dedicated funding, as well as stronger capacity and buy-in from all stakeholders—especially those who have been less involved in the past—will be critical. In particular, local grassroots organizations want to see more integration this time and not just “on-behalf” representation from their partners in the capital. The National Steering Committee needs to strengthen its role as a coordination body and support multi-sectoral collaboration. The SiLNAP is a long-term project that needs to draw on Sierra Leoneans at all levels of society, so many of whom are already working to rebuild a more gender-inclusive society with their fellow citizens.

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CONCLUSION

Marie O'Reilly

The creation of national action plans to implement Resolution 1325 in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Philippines, Serbia, and Sierra Leone has filled gaps in domestic policies relating to women, peace, and security in each country. The development of each NAP involved a broadly inclusive process that drew input from a variety of government ministries, security sector actors, and civil society organizations working on issues related to women, peace, and security. However, momentum then decreased in each case when it came to implementing the NAP, and progress toward each plan's objectives varied significantly, in part depending on what emerged as the primary focus in each country.



Global Conversation on a post-2015 SDG Agenda in the DRC. Photo by UNDP, Flickr.

Across the cases, interviewees reported that the creation of a NAP contributed to increases in collaboration and communication between civil society and the state on issues relating to women, peace, and security. It also advanced awareness of these issues and of Resolution 1325. Nonetheless, there were significant obstacles to progress in each case, across the elements needed for a “high-impact” NAP: political will, coordination, monitoring and evaluation, and financing. Some creative approaches to implementing the NAPs also emerged, suggesting a number of opportunities for making them more effective, in particular with regard to advancing political will, tackling new security threats, and further localizing their implementation.

Of course, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Philippines, Serbia, and Sierra Leone have taken distinct approaches to

implementing Resolution 1325, in many ways. Indeed, these four countries were selected as case studies precisely because of their diverse contexts, whether relating to peace and security challenges, levels of gender equality, or geography and socioeconomic outlook. Nonetheless, the commonalities that emerged across the cases, as well as particular insights from each one, offer valuable lessons for those looking to create and influence NAPs in various contexts around the world.

A Patchwork of Progress

In each case, it was difficult to isolate the impact of the NAP on developments relating to its theme and objectives during the same time period. Many other factors (including complementary legislation and civil society initiatives) were usually at play. But in every case, there was broad consensus that the NAP increased awareness of and dialogue around priorities relating to Resolution 1325 among policymakers, policy-shapers in civil society, and members of the security sector. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that—at the very least—the creation of the NAP and accompanying focus on its themes and objectives contributed to change in these areas in some shape or form, alongside other initiatives.

Thus, in the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, efforts to tackle conflict-related sexual violence increased after the creation of the NAP. The president established a new office directly under his authority responsible for combatting this scourge, loosely linked to the NAP's third pillar on countering sexual violence. Initial indications suggest that incidents of conflict-related sexual violence have since decreased among the state's armed forces and, though progress is difficult to measure, efforts to “shatter the silence” around this subject are likely contributing to a slow shift in attitudes regarding this previously taboo subject. Relatively little progress was evident in the area of women's participation in peace and security processes. Those reforming the police force have begun to implement gender-sensitivity trainings and set up systems to prevent discrimination in the recruitment and promotion of female officers. Three women were appointed as generals in the army, but broader women's participation remains extremely low at 2% of military personnel. New obstacles emerged in terms of women's participation in politics—a key channel for women to influence elite-driven peace and security processes and policies in that country.

In the **Philippines**, women's participation in peace processes has advanced significantly since the NAP's creation in 2010. The country has become an outlier for its high levels of inclusion of female leaders in peace negotiations, some of whom made significant contributions to securing a comprehensive peace agreement to end a four-decade-long insurgency in the country's southern island of Mindanao. Women's participation in the police and armed forces has also increased since 2010, as

has their representation in local and national politics. However, progress is less visible for women in conflict-affected areas like Mindanao, where change has not kept pace with the national level. Significant structural barriers remain to advancing women's participation in policymaking and decision-making around peace and security issues in this region.

In **Serbia**, the proportion of women in parliament jumped from 22% to 33% between 2011 and 2012, in large part due to renewed efforts to effectively implement an existing legislative quota, and it has remained above 30% since then.¹ However, with the NAP sitting primarily under the Ministry of Defense, it places greater emphasis on women's participation in the security sector, where some progress was seen in shifting attitudes toward women's roles and the importance of gender-sensitive approaches to peacekeeping. Nonetheless, the levels of women's inclusion in the armed forces have remained static since 2010. And the creation and implementation of the NAP highlighted divisions between government and some sectors of civil society that consider the broader direction of women, peace, and security in Serbia to be overly concerned with the military and insufficiently focused on the root causes of conflict.

In **Sierra Leone**, there is some progress evident in the security sector following the adoption of the NAP. Alongside the appointment of West Africa's first female brigadier general, there have been efforts to increase gender mainstreaming in the armed forces. The proportion of women in the police force has increased, reaching 20%. However, with the advent of Ebola, NAP implementation was placed on hold, as concerned citizens in government and civil society shifted focus to deal with this unconventional threat to security and stability, which the NAP had not foreseen.

What was quite clear across the cases is that in addition to heightening awareness of issues relating to women, peace, and security, the process of developing and implementing the NAP contributed to greater collaboration and communication around these issues between state and non-state actors. As explored in this report's Introduction, state–society relations can be fraught in conflict-affected contexts and frequently influence the chances for consolidating peace or backsliding into war. Civil society organizations can play a significant intermediary role between political elites and citizens in these contexts, particularly for women who often face greater barriers to entry in other intermediary structures such as political parties. While further research is needed to examine the effects of this increase in collaboration between multiple stakeholders on long-term peace and democracy, it is reasonable to hypothesize that an increase in dialogue on peace and security issues—particularly one that brings

in traditionally marginalized stakeholders such as women's groups—is a promising development for society at large.²

Obstacles and Opportunities

Despite elements of progress in each case relative to the situation prior to the NAPs, significant obstacles also stymied their impact. First, as deeper structural change was frequently lacking, persistent gender discrimination in some areas consistently prevented states from achieving the objectives set out in their NAPs. Second, though the NAPs frequently drew from past conflicts to inform future planning, many failed to also put structures in place to adapt to new kinds of peace and security challenges that would emerge. The Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone was a tragic illustration of the fact that the NAP was not responsive to an unanticipated human security emergency. Third, the NAPs' objectives and the actors involved in implementing them frequently failed to get beyond the national level to address provincial and municipal priorities and to engage and empower champions at these local levels to advance change in citizens' lives. Fourth, although there was evidence of political will and inclusive processes in creating the NAPs, all of the countries struggled to sustain political will, coordination, and financial support in the implementation phase. Finally, a number of factors pointed to a significant need for improved monitoring, evaluation, and communication of each NAP's results.

Despite the scale and scope of these obstacles, they are not insurmountable. As countries revise and renew their NAPs, and new countries seek to create them, there are a number of avenues for advancing progress and deepening impact.

1. ADDRESS STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO CHANGE

Cross-national indices of gender equality show that gender-based discrimination is particularly prevalent in conflict-affected countries.

The road to gender equality in the realm of peace and security remains long, and interviewees in every context reported persistent and significant gender-based discrimination in multiple levels of society that curtailed possibilities for change and prospects for each NAP's success. Even in the country with the highest level of gender equality, the Philippines, women on the island of Mindanao continue to experience significant barriers to safety and security as well as to access to decision-making roles. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, even when women have been elected to parliament, their potential to exert influence over peace and security policies is undermined by persistent gender biases at home and in society at large. Indeed, cross-national indices of gender equality show that gender-based discrimination is particularly prevalent in conflict-affected countries, and that violence in society and violence against women go hand in hand. Fourteen of



Council considers women's role in peace and security. UN Photo by Rick Bajornas.

the seventeen countries with the highest levels of gender discrimination in the OECD's index on gender inequality also experienced conflict in the last two decades.³

Yet for the most part, the NAPs struggled to address the deeper societal transformations required to change attitudes and behaviors relating to gender equality and women's status in society, which continue to significantly impede prevention, participation, and protection in the arena of peace and security. This is a long-term endeavor that goes beyond a single NAP, but its impact on peace and security for society overall is likely to be significant. Quantitative analysis shows that societies that treat their women well are also likely to be more peaceful internally, with their neighbors, and with the international community.⁴ And new research into domains not typically considered part of the women, peace, and security agenda shows that those creating NAPs may need to expand their horizons when considering which areas of focus will generate the most change.

For example, academics have found a robust connection between state security and family law structures regulating minimum age of marriage, property and inheritance rights, divorce and custody rights, and the right to "discipline" a spouse. Quantitative analysis shows that countries with very inequitable family laws are the least peaceful, and countries with the most inequitable family laws are the most fragile.⁵ This is likely because the subordination of women in the home normalizes inequity and violence in society, because all "others"—whether different in religion, language, ethnicity, etc.—will also be treated as subordinate, as their status is closer to women's than men's. The creation, revision, and implementation of NAPs provides a forum in which state elites and leaders in civil society—including religious and cultural

leaders—can come together to address these challenges. As those working on NAPs struggle to decide what to prioritize amid limited resources, it is worth expanding the topics under consideration to include some of these structural issues that could have a significant impact on women's participation, protection, and peace writ large.

2. CREATE FLEXIBLE PLANS THAT CAN ADAPT TO NEW SECURITY THREATS

Following the creation of their NAPs in 2010, all four countries confronted new or unfamiliar threats to peace and stability that the NAP had not accounted for. In Sierra Leone, the Ebola pandemic overturned the post-conflict stability as it left nearly 4,000 people dead and paralyzed many governance structures. Despite being more vulnerable to sexual violence amid the collapse of social norms and the rule of law, many women leveraged their traditional roles as caregivers and frontline health workers to stem the spread of the disease. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the new specter of election-related conflict came to the fore in 2015, stymying women's efforts to campaign for political office and diverting attention from the ongoing threats to peace and security and persistent conflict-related sexual violence in the country's east. In the Philippines, conflict-affected populations in Mindanao faced additional and unexpected vulnerability through more frequent exposure to floods and recurrent storms. In Serbia, a recent return to nationalism exacerbated rifts in the women's peace movement and contributed to threats against female activists.

These countries are not alone in facing unfamiliar peace and security challenges that fall outside the realm of the

original Resolution 1325. Others are facing the rise of violent extremism, unprecedented levels of gang violence, and the security implications of climate change, to name a few more. These examples demonstrate that peace is not only the absence of violence, and issues relating to women’s participation and protection expand beyond the realms of peace negotiations and security sector reform most commonly associated with women, peace, and security.

No one can predict the future, but NAPs need to be more flexible so that they can adapt when the peace and security situation changes. One way to accomplish this is to incorporate a human security approach that sets the NAP up to succeed when these unfamiliar challenges arise. Human security complements traditional “hard” security approaches by being people-centered rather than state-centered. This creates an understanding that vulnerabilities are not limited to state-based threats but can also include threats to political security, economic security, and health security, for example. It allows for a more holistic operationalization of Resolution 1325 and at the same time creates space for more inclusive solutions and pathways to resilience.

3. LOCALIZE PLANS TO ADDRESS DIVERSE PRIORITIES FOR PEACE

National action plans are designed to implement the international frameworks initiated by Resolution 1325 at the national level in a way that better reflects local realities and priorities. However, as documented in the case studies, these “local” realities and priorities also vary within countries, and in some cases substantive disagreement on these priorities among civil society organizations could not be overcome.

For example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, interviewees in the capital Kinshasa frequently focused on advancing women’s political participation while those in the conflict-affected east spoke more often about the need to

address conflict-related sexual violence and persistent threats posed by rebel groups in that part of the country. In the Philippines, women in the capital of Manila have championed increased participation in Track-One peace negotiations while those in Mindanao also need support in their more informal conflict-management and early-warning structures. In Serbia, civil society organizations could not always find common ground in terms of whether the NAP should focus more on advancing gender mainstreaming in the security sector or on anti-militaristic paths to peace that call those implicated in past crimes to account. In Sierra Leone, interviewees reported that varying levels of literacy and local language barriers limited the NAP’s reach.

Indeed, beyond identifying needs and priorities, the case studies also suggested a capital–periphery divide in terms of ownership and implementation more broadly. Civil society groups outside the capital frequently reported lower levels of participation and consultations than capital-based organizations.

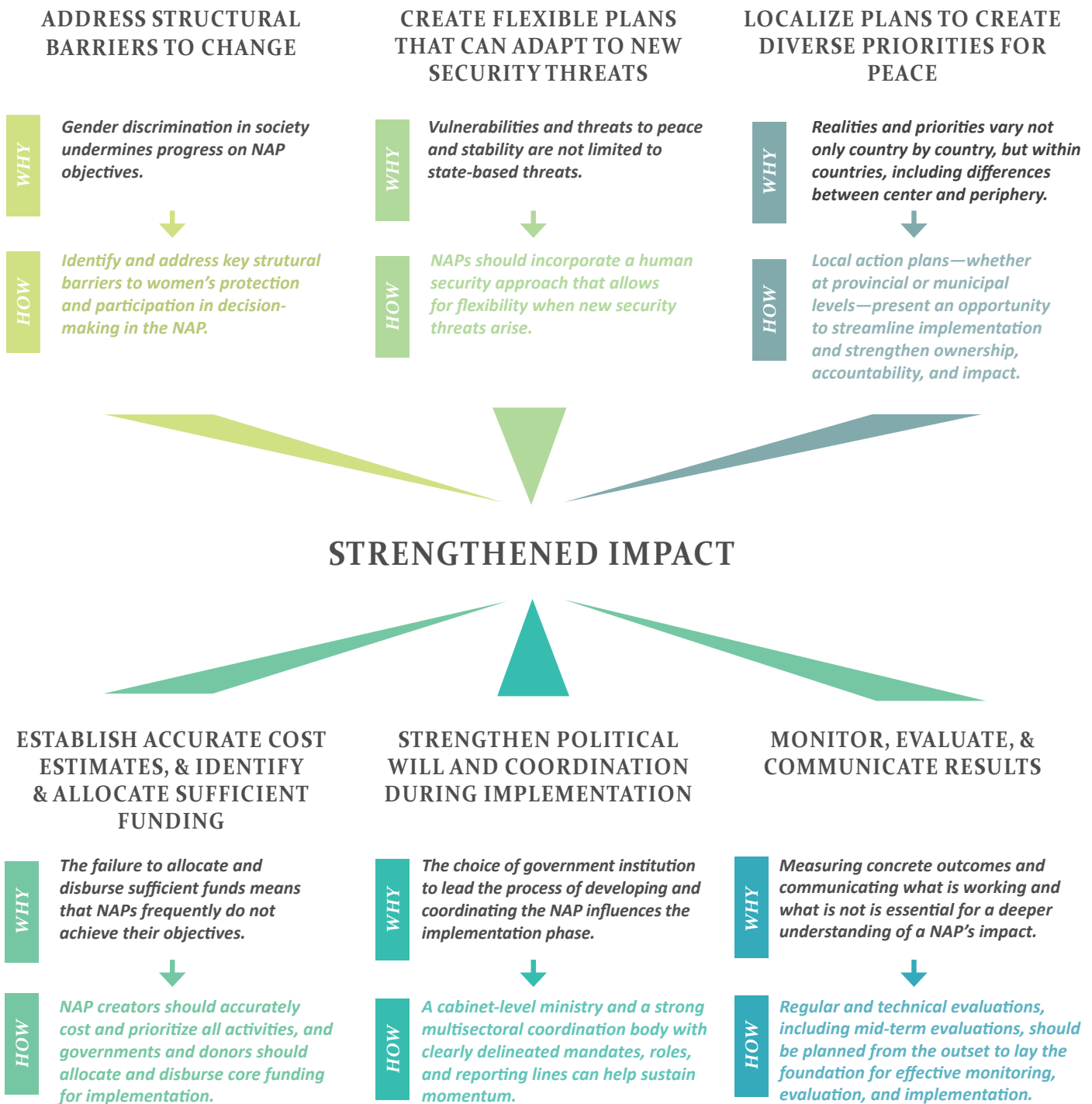
Local action plans—whether at provincial or municipal levels—present an opportunity to streamline the implementation of Resolution 1325 across a country’s diverse communities and capture a greater variety of peace and security priorities. For example, a plan led by the mayor’s office in coordination with the local police, other local government agencies, and civil society organizations active in the city arguably has a much better chance of capturing the needs and aspirations most relevant to that particular community. This in turn can increase chances that action will also be taken to implement activities and foster change. Localization of the NAP could also strengthen ownership, accountability, and impact of NAPs by allowing for greater participation of state, security, and civil society actors in their own provinces and municipalities.

Initial efforts to pilot local plans in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Serbia are promising in this regard, and future research into their impact would contribute greatly to the

Woman participates in a town hall meeting. Public domain.



AVENUES FOR ADVANCING NAPs



body of knowledge on NAPs as a whole. Ultimately, local plans could be used to inform and revise future versions of national NAPs, which should in turn inform the international conversation on women, peace, and security.

4. ESTABLISH ACCURATE COST ESTIMATES, AND IDENTIFY AND ALLOCATE SUFFICIENT FUNDING IN THE NAP'S DEVELOPMENT PHASE

It is possible that the primary reason for shortcomings in NAP implementation is the failure to allocate and disburse sufficient funds for the initiatives outlined in the plan. Financial planning for NAPs should begin in the plan's development phase. Those creating the NAP should cost all activities associated with the plan as accurately and realistically as possible by drawing on historical data or price research on similar programs. It should also be clear in the plan which activities are a priority.

The government (with support from external actors as needed) should then allocate and disburse core funding for the NAP, in particular to support a coordination body, and then publish annually the amounts that relevant ministries have spent on implementing activities.⁶

Given the financial constraints in many fragile and conflict-affected countries, international donors (public and private) also need to step up their support to NAP implementation. Only 6% of aid to fragile states prioritizes gender equality, and this figure drops to 2% for peace and security-specific funding.⁷ NAPs offer international donors a ready-made needs assessment of women, peace, and security challenges in a country and a national statement of priorities that has been agreed upon by diverse stakeholders in state structures and civil society. They embody international principles for aid effectiveness, which include recipient countries' ownership over their policies; donors' alignment with recipient countries' national strategies and institutions; and greater harmonization of donor action.⁸

Given the financial constraints in many fragile and conflict-affected countries, international donors (public and private) also need to step up their support to NAP implementation.

Yet, because the national ministries responsible for implementation are weak or existing channels for funding international organizations doing in-country work are easier to access, donors frequently divert funding outside of the NAP framework. In many cases, interviewees suggested that international donors often rhetorically support NAPs but rarely connect their funding directly to the plan. This arguably exacerbates challenges of coordination for government ministries. It could also adversely affect political will from the national government if the NAP is not perceived by international donors as being a salient priority. (Political will

and coordination are further addressed below.) Instead, donors could bolster national capacities for peace by funding NAP initiatives directly while also tying their funding to mechanisms that ensure transparency and accountability. International donors can help strengthen political will, coordination, and financing of the NAP by committing to support the plan and ministries involved.

5. STRENGTHEN POLITICAL WILL AND COORDINATION DURING IMPLEMENTATION

In each case reviewed in this report, demand for a national action plan emanated from civil society organizations and governments chose to support its creation. The development of the plan was largely an inclusive and collaborative process. The resulting document helped fill a gap relating to women, peace, and security in domestic policy frameworks. However, implementation frequently fell short of objectives as the initial political will and coordination that supported the plan's development could not be sufficiently sustained or extended in the implementation phase.

The choice of government institution to lead the process of developing and coordinating the NAP appeared to influence levels of political will and coordination in the implementation phase. Typically, a cabinet-level ministry capable of influencing cross-governmental decision-making is the most appropriate for a NAP, which affects policies and programs in multiple ministries and agencies. In Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the gender ministries were well-placed to take primary responsibility for the NAP as the coordinators of gender-related policy work across government. However, these gender ministries (like many of their counterparts elsewhere) have limited capacity and political power compared to a ministry of defense or a ministry of foreign affairs.

The UN's global study on implementing Resolution 1325 points out that "stronger outcomes" are observable where the national action plan sits with a "strong" line ministry. Nonetheless, the case of Serbia highlighted challenges that can arise when a NAP is closely associated with a strong ministry that focuses primarily on one sector (in this case, defense). Similar challenges have also arisen in cases beyond the scope of this report, where giving primary responsibility for the NAP to a ministry of foreign affairs has led critics to argue that the resulting NAP failed to address women, peace, and security challenges at home and instead focused on those issues abroad.

While both international and domestic advocacy can influence political will, a strong coordination body can overcome some of the limitations that a particular host ministry for the NAP may present. A clear delineation of mandates, roles, and reporting lines can help those working within government and outside of government to hold relevant ministries accountable and to

maintain momentum even if political will is lacking. As such, coordination bodies should be appropriately staffed with skilled individuals who can communicate effectively across implementing ministries, agencies, and civil society organizations.

6. MONITOR, EVALUATE, AND COMMUNICATE RESULTS

This report examined *perceptions* of the impact of NAPs in four countries, drawing on the limited additional data available. Interviewees familiar with their country's NAP frequently concluded that the plan was or was not advancing progress, but few could articulate concrete, specific outcomes or indicators directly related to the NAP. Similarly, expectations for what the NAP could achieve varied significantly within countries. In addition, many reported that despite an initially inclusive process, there was a lack of communication and consultation in the implementation phase. On the other hand, civil society organizations frequently reported that they were implementing NAP-related activities but these were not explicitly linked to the NAP nor did they report on these activities to any central monitoring body.

The intensity of these challenges varied by country, but they point to a broader need for more robust monitoring and evaluation systems. Measuring concrete outcomes and communicating what is working and what is not is essential for a deeper understanding of a NAP's impact among government, security sector, and civil society actors, as well as donors and the international community. Monitoring and evaluation can support coordination of the many actors involved in implementing a NAP. It can also help manage expectations by delineating more clearly what the NAP's targets are and giving a better sense of how long it might take to achieve them. It



Global Open Day for Women and Peace in Gaza. Photo by UNIFEM on Flickr.

encourages accountability and transparency among all those involved. In particular, it can strengthen support for the NAP domestically and internationally, including financial support, since it documents progress and areas where more support may be needed.⁹

Civil society shadow reports on the implementation of Resolution 1325 are valuable, but more regular and technical evaluations are needed of NAPs in particular. These include mid-term evaluations of a NAP's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for increased impact—which could drive course corrections—as well as summative evaluations of a NAP's successes and failures at the end of its tenure, to gain insights into how to enhance its impact if renewed or revised. The creation of detailed government plans from the outset, which include targets, budgets, baselines, and indicators to monitor performance against NAP priorities, can lay the foundation for effective monitoring, evaluation, and implementation.¹⁰

More than 60 countries have National Action Plans for implementing Resolution 1325. This means there is now a wealth of experience to draw from as others seek to create their first plans or strengthen their existing frameworks. This report explored challenges and opportunities in just four countries with NAPs. Across diverse contexts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Philippines, Serbia, and Sierra Leone, some successes and failures were shared; others were not. All offered insights into how states and civil society organizations are working to advance national understandings of peace and security toward one that is more inclusive. Despite the challenges, they are contributing to a broader global shift in the process.

NOTES

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3. Author’s previous research for Clinton Foundation and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in cooperation with the Economist Intelligence Unit, “No Ceilings: The Full Participation Report,” March 2015, p. 21, citing OECD Development Centre, Social Institutions and Gender Index 2014, available at genderindex.org, and Uppsala Conflict Data Program/International Peace Research Institute (UCDP/PRI) Armed Conflict Dataset at Uppsala University; EIU Database. “In 2014, the OECD ranked 17 countries as having ‘very high’ levels of discrimination in their social institutions, including discriminatory family codes, restricted civil liberties, and restricted access to resources.”
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6. Many thanks to Anne Marie Goetz for this suggestion.
7. Radhika Coomaraswamy et al., “Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325,” New York: UN Women, 2015.
8. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action, 2005/2008*.
9. This paragraph is based on Zsuzsanna Lippai and Angelic Young, *What Matters Most: Measuring Plans for Inclusive Security* (Washington, DC: Inclusive Security, 2014).
10. For more information on monitoring and evaluation strategies for high-impact national action plans, see <https://actionplans.inclusivesecurity.org/our-services/>.

ANNEX I: ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------------|---|
| AFRC | Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (Sierra Leone) |
| ARMM | Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao |
| BBL | Bangsamoro Basic Law |
| BCSP | Belgrade Centre for Security Policy |
| CEDAW | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women |
| CPP-NPA | Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army |
| CAB | Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro |
| CAFCO | Permanent Dialogue Framework for Congolese Women |
| ECOMOG | Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community of West African States |
| EU | European Union |
| EVD | Ebola Virus Disease |
| DDR | Demilitarization, Demobilization, and Reintegration |
| FAB | Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro |
| FSU | Family Support Unit (Sierra Leone) |
| GAD | Gender and Development |
| ICTY | International Criminal Tribunal of the Former Yugoslavia |
| IDPs | Internally Displaced Persons |
| LGU | Local Government Units |
| M23 | March 23 Movement (Democratic Republic of Congo) |
| MILF | Moro Islamic Liberation Front |
| MoD | Ministry of Defense |
| MoFA | Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| MoI | Ministry of Interior |
| MONUSCO | UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo |
| MoSWGCA | Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children's Affairs (Sierra Leone) |
| MRU | Mano River Union |
| NAP | National Action Plan |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| NSCWPS | National Steering Committee on Women, Peace and Security (Philippines) |
| OPAPP | Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process |
| OSCE | Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe |
| PAMANA | Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan (Peaceful and Resilient Communities) Program |
| PCW | Philippine Commission on Women |
| PrepCom | Preparation Committee (Philippines) |
| RSLAF | Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces |
| RUF | Revolutionary United Front |
| SALW | Small Arms and Light Weapons |
| SGBV | Sexual Gender-Based Violence |

ABBREVIATIONS, CONTINUED

| | |
|---------------|--|
| SiLNAP | Sierra Leone National Action Plan |
| SLP | Sierra Leone Police |
| TJRC | Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission |
| TRC | Truth and Reconciliation Commission |
| UN | United Nations |
| WPS | Women, Peace, and Security |

ANNEX II: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

| DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Bambi, Annie | Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) - DRC |
| Bemba Ndokwa, Françoise | Assemblée Nationale/Commission Genre and Parité |
| Bireheka, Immaculée | PAIF (Promotion and Support of Women's Initiative) |
| Bitondo, Aurelie | REFAM (Réseau des Femmes Africaines Ministres et Parlementaires) |
| Bolingo Lessere Nduawe, Marie | l'Etat-Major Général des FARDC, Service d'Education Civique, Patriotique et d'Action Sociale |
| Bukassa Ntumba, Martine | Ministère de l'Intérieur et Sécurité |
| Bulupiy Galati, Simon | Assemblée Nationale/Commission Genre and Parité |
| Bumba Likita, Roger | l'Etat-Major Général des FARDC, Service d'Education Civique, Patriotique et d'Action Sociale |
| Bungu, Damien* | Communauté des Amis de la Nature et de la Culture (CANACU) |
| Caba Mihigo, Parfait | UNFPA Office Goma, DRC |
| Coll, Bryan | United Nations Mission for the Stabilization in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) |
| Dikanga, Thérèse | LIFCE (Ligue de Femme Congolaises pur les Elections) |
| Divioka Nimi, Césaire | Bureau du Représentant Personnel du Chef de L'Etat en charge de la Lutte contre les Violences Sexuelles et le Recrutement des Enfants |
| Elesse, Michel | CSRP (Comité de Suivi de la Réforme de la Police) |
| Esambo Diata, Irène | CJR1325 (Centre d'études sur la Justice et la Résolution 1325) |
| Faida, Mwangila | BCGPCD (Bureau de Consultations en Genre, Participation Citoyenne et Développement) |
| Forslund, Lindsay | Stabilization and Support Unit, United Nations Mission for the Stabilization in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) |
| Galati, Bulupiy | Parlement/Commission Genre et Parité |
| Kamwanya, Esther | Secrétariat Permanente de la 1325 |
| Kande, Monique | FIFAD (International Foundation for African Women for Development) |
| Kankolongo, Nelly | Bureau du Représentant Personnel du Chef de L'Etat en charge de la Lutte contre les Violences Sexuelles et le Recrutement des Enfants |
| Kasindi, Laurent | Search for Common Ground DRC |
| Kipele Aky Azua, Lucie | Ministère de la Femme, Famille at de L'Enfant |
| Kipulu Kabenga, Antoinette | Assemblée Nationale/Commission Genre and Parité |
| Lusenge, Julienne | Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises/Solidarité Féminine pour la Paix et le Développement Intégral (SOFEPADI) |
| Malimukono, Joséphine | Ligue pour la Solidarité Congolaise |
| Manero, Carla | International Alert DRC |
| Mapana, Ricky | Search for Common Ground DRC |
| Masika Bihamba, Justine | SFVS (Synergie des Femmes pour les Victimes de Violences Sexuelles) |
| Matungulu, Aimée Espérance* | Centre National d'Appui au Développement et à la Participation populaire (CENADEP) |
| Mbangu, Nelly | Dynamique Des Femmes Juristes |
| Moleka Anongo Daida, Jacqueline | Mécanisme National de Suivi de l'accord cadre d'Addis-Abeba |
| Muabi Tumba, Marie | Assemblée Nationale/Commission Genre and Parité |
| Mueller, Timo | Human Rights Watch Office Goma, DRC |

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|---------------------------------|---|
| Mulongo, Ivan | Assemblée Nationale/Commission Genre and Parité |
| Muteba Ngoy, Henri-Baudouin | Parlement/Commission Genre et Parité |
| Mutombo Kiese, Rose | CAFCO (Cadre Permanent de Concentration des Femmes Congolaises) |
| Mutsindu, Faulestine | FUPROS (Femmes Unis pour le Progrès Social) |
| Ngalula, Josephine | GEDROF (Réseau Centre et Droit de la Femme) |
| Ngungu Kwate, Jeanine Gabrielle | Nous pouvons |
| Nzundu, Fanny Wabonga* | Collectif de Femmes Rurales pour le Développement (COFERD) |
| Nzuzi Nsamba, Jeanne Hortence | CONAFED (Comité National Femme et Développement) |
| Ongotto, Josée-Blandine | Tetra Tech |
| Robinson, Richard | Alphamin Bisie Mining SA, Goma |
| Rumbu-Kazang, Marie-Jacqueline | AVIFEM (Agence Nationale de la Lutte contre les Violence Sexuelles faites à la Femme et la Jeune Fille) |
| Tambew, Astrid | RAC (Restoration Africa Center) |
| Thompson, Eve | NDI (National Democratic Institute) |
| Tshongo, Claudine | DFJ (Dynamique des femmes juristes) |
| Tumba Kaniki, Gérard | Mécanisme National de Suivi de l'accord cadre d'Addis-Abeba |
| Zawadi, Rosalie | Radio Okapi |

* Interviewed by email

PHILIPPINES

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Agoncillio, Maria Victoria | Gender and Development Office, Philippine Army |
| Arnado, Mary Ann | Mindanao People's Caucus |
| Baleda, Annette | Philippine Commission on Women |
| Baylosis, MA Rebecca Rafaela | Philippine Commission on Women |
| Bitoy, Brelyn | Gender and Development Office, Philippine Army |
| Cariaga, Bernadette | USAID |
| Chan, Lourdesita "Bing" | University Research Council |
| de Dios, Aurora "Oyie" Javate | Women and Gender Institute (WAGI) |
| de Jesus, Emmi | Gabriela Women's Party |
| Freeman, Jennifer | Kroc Institute |
| Galace, Jasmine | We Act 1325 |
| Hervilla, Hope | n/a (human rights activist) |
| Lara, "Pancho" Francisco | International Alert Philippines |
| Lidasan, Mussolini | Al Qalam Institute |
| Mandin, Lorna | Gender and Development Office, Davao City |
| Mutin, Sittie Jehanne | Regional Commission on Bangsamoro Women |
| Rasul, Amina | Council of Islam and Democracy |
| Sandoval, MA Gloefe "Gettie" C.I | OPAPP (Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process) |
| Santiago, Irene | Philippine Women's College of Davao, Mindanao |
| Valencia, Rafael C. | Philippine Army |
| Verzosa, Fatima | USAID |

SERBIA

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Babović, Marija | University of Belgrade |
| Beker, Kosana | Commision for Protection of Equality |
| Birač, Branko | Centar E8 |
| Bjeloš, Maja | BCSP (Belgrade Centre for Security Policy) |
| Božović, Vladimir | Ministry of Interior |
| Group interview | Deputy Prime Minister's Office |
| Đorđević, Zoran | Ministry of Defense |
| Đurđević-Lukić, Svetlana | CPPR (Center for Public Policy Research) |
| Đurović, Danijela | SEESAC-UNDP (South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons) |
| Fridman, Orli | Centre for Comparative Conflcit Studies |
| Janković, Jelena | Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| Jovanović, Violeta | NALED (National Association for Local Economic Development) |
| Knežević, Dragan | Coordination Body for Gender Equality of the Government of Serbia |
| Lađevac, Ivona | CPPR (Center for Public Policy Research) |
| Lazarević, Mina | BFPE (Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence) |
| Miražić, Milica | Kvinna till Kvinna |
| Petrović, Dragana | Gender Equality Council of the Government of Serbia |
| Petrović, Nataša | GMF BTM (German Marshall Fund - Balkan Trust for Democracy) |
| Radoman, Jelena | CPPR (Center for Public Policy Research) |
| Stojković, Biljana | Ministry of Defense |
| Subotić, Gordana | Dea Dia (Young Feminist Association) |
| Topalović, Goran | Centre for Peacekeeping Operations of the Serbian Armed Forces |
| Vitas Majstorović, Maja | GPPAC (Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict) |
| Zajović, Staša | Women in Black |

SIERRA LEONE

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|--------------------------|--|
| Bangura Kohyee, Salimatu | Sierra Leone Prisons |
| Bayoh, Gloria | Human Rights Commission |
| Boyah, Kes | Human Rights Committee in Sierra Leone Parliament |
| Caulker, Yema | WANEP (West Africa Network for Peace) |
| French, Bernadette | CGG (Campaign for Good Governance) |
| Ibrahim, Aisha Fofana | 50/50 Group |
| Jombla, Edward | WANEP (West Africa Network for Peace) |
| Gbappy-Brima, Gladys | Sierra Leone Parliament |
| Kabia, Kestoria | Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces; Ministry of Defense |
| Kaikai, Cecilia | Sierra Leone Prisons |
| Karama, Joseph | Ministry of Justice |
| King, Jamesina | Human Rights Commission |
| Koroma, Linda | Mano River Union |
| Lahai, David | OFID (Organisation for Inclusive Development) |
| Mallah, Hanna | MARWOPNET (Mano River Women Peace Network) |

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|----------------------|---|
| Mcarthy, Rosaline | Women's Forum Sierra Leone |
| Momoh, Hawa | Sierra Leone Police |
| Nyuma, Franced | ONS (Office of National Security) |
| Okumu, Mary | UN Women Office Sierra Leone |
| Olu-Williams, Daphne | Human Rights Commission |
| Peacock, Maude | Women's Forum Sierra Leone |
| Pratt, Nana | National Organisation for Women; University of Sierra Leone |
| Ruth | VOW (Voice of Women, Moyomba District) |
| Sillah, Kalie | NCD (National Commission for Democracy) |
| Sogbandi, Solomon | Amnesty International Office Sierra Leone |
| Sowa, Amara | Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development |
| Tommy, Ibrahim | CARL (Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law) |
| Turay, Elizabeth | Sierra Leone Police |
| Vandi, Charles | Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs |



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