The Institute for Inclusive Security

Recommendations for
Reviewing and Revising National Action Plans on Women, Peace, and Security

September 2014

Since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, dozens of countries have created national policies—often known as national action plans or NAPs—to solidify their commitment to women, peace, and security. As these states strive for effective, impactful implementation of these plans, many, including the US, are embarking on a process of evaluating the impact of their national strategies. Drawing from the examples of several countries that have already undertaken these steps, Inclusive Security has compiled the following best practice recommendations for the review and revision of NAPs.

1. **Assemble a reference group to oversee the review process.**

   In advance of conducting a review or evaluation, the government should assemble a reference group composed of ministry representatives who sit on women, peace, and security working groups; civil society organizations; key congressional or parliamentary staff; and technical experts. This group should meet regularly to provide assistance and advice throughout the review process. It should be responsible for developing the terms of reference for the NAP review, facilitating communication among and between government agencies and civil society, and hiring an independent evaluator to conduct a review, as needed.

2. **Formalize the role of civil society.**

   The government should establish clear communication channels for civil society consultation in the review process. Civil society representatives on the reference group could serve as ideal liaisons. Additionally, the review should include workshops, roundtables, and forums to garner input from both local civil society organizations (CSOs) and, if applicable, those in the conflict-affected countries targeted in the NAP. CSOs should be given opportunities to provide feedback and comments on the final report.

3. **Use specific and measurable indicators.**

   Best practice in any review or evaluation prescribes the systematic analysis of data over a finite period of time. In order to do this, those overseeing the review should rely on information collected against implementation indicators established during the design process. If such indicators do not exist, the reference group should develop them through a consultative, participatory process in advance of the review.

There are three important considerations for NAP indicator development:

1| Evaluating the success of implementation requires not only output indicators that measure progress against specific activities, but also outcome indicators that assess progress against specified outcomes;

2| A nuanced picture of implementation requires a combination of quantitative (numerical) and qualitative (categorical) indicators; and

3| To be effective, indicators should be limited in number, focusing on information that is meaningful and relevant for the review, implementation, and decision-making processes.

Reviewers should refer to the indicators for UNSCR 1325 developed by the UN to understand how implementation of the resolution will be monitored on a global level. For country-specific indicators, reviewers can consult sample sets developed by Inclusive Security.

4. **Assess the strength of your national action plan's monitoring and evaluation system.**
A strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system can improve policies and programs, strengthen commitment, support partnerships, encourage accountability, and build a foundation for sustainable investments. Clearly articulated results and specific, measurable indicators are foundations of an M&E system, which is ideally established during the creation of the NAP. The M&E plan should outline the data collection and analysis methods that make the indicators operational, as well as the responsibilities and timelines for reporting and evaluation. This framework should also reference the responsibilities and mandates related to gathering and using information on implementation. Assessing the strengths of the M&E system can help pinpoint any issues related to data collection and reporting processes, while also identifying ideas for how to obtain better data.

The review or revision of the NAP is an important opportunity to develop or strengthen elements of these systems. Inclusive Security's guide to NAP M&E also offers ideas and best practices on this topic.

5. **Make reports public to facilitate domestic and international accountability.**
A version of the report resulting from the review should be made available to the public in a timely manner to promote accountability, demonstrate the government's commitment to implementation of the NAP, and serve as an example to facilitate learning on NAPs internationally.

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6. **Allocate a budget.**

   Depending on the rigor of review, costs vary widely. If the national action plan does not provide for an M&E budget, funding for the review should be sourced from implementing agencies' budgets. Beyond supplying resources, contributions from implementing agencies' budgets can also serve to cultivate ownership. Even if the review is simply a compilation of monitoring data, it is critical that there is an allocated budget to handle administration and report production costs.

7. **Support an independent review.**

   While the ideal review is conducted as an exercise in collaboration among government and civil society actors, one option for completing such a review—whether mid-term or summative—is to contract an independent evaluator. This function may be available within government (e.g., some governments have independent evaluation agencies or units within ministries that can perform this type of work) or it may be necessary to hire an expert consultant. [1]

   For more information on how Inclusive Security can support your NAP review or revision, see our website or contact Angelic Young, Senior Coordinator of Resolution to Act, at angelic_young@inclusivesecurity.org or 202.403.2004.

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   [1] *For example, Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development contracted Inclusive Security to complete an independent mid-term review of their NAP. This work is ongoing, to be complete in September 2014.*

About The Institute for Inclusive Security

The Institute for Inclusive Security's bold goal is to change the international security paradigm. Sustainable peace is possible only when those who shape policy include women and other affected groups in the prevention and transformation of violent conflict. Guided by this belief and vision, Inclusive Security, a program of Hunt Alternatives, supports women's leadership as an essential tool to prevent violence, stop war, and restore communities after deadly conflicts. We also provide expert advice to policymakers, grounded in research that demonstrates women's contributions to peacebuilding.

For more information, visit www.inclusivesecurity.org.

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