What's in a NAP?

A short analysis of selected Women, Peace & Security National Action Plans

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Overview

For the purposes of this analysis, a selection of National Action Plans (NAPs) was reviewed. The NAPs chosen are from donor countries that have current plans: Australia, Denmark, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (US). Canada's expired NAP was also included. All NAPs used for this analysis can be found on the PeaceWomen.org website.

This analysis considers different elements of the NAPs: their goals and objectives, initiatives and actions, focus countries, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Additionally, representatives of civil society in several of the countries were contacted for their perspective on the development of their countries' NAPs.

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Analysis

NAP Goals and Objectives

Of the NAPs considered, the stated goals and objectives varied in their length and the detail in which they were described. All of the NAPs reviewed address women's participation in their goals for the document, most often explicitly linking this to participation in peace processes. Of the 10 NAPs, four (Sweden, the Netherlands, UK, and US) provide brief stated goals that only involve strengthening or enabling women's participation or empowerment.

Otherwise, amongst the remaining six plans, there is a great variety in specific focus of the goals.

Two NAPs (Australia and New Zealand) explicitly mention civil society organizations within their goals. Australia and Ireland include developing a gender perspective in their policies and engagement as part of their goals. Denmark and Ireland specifically reference gender-based violence.

Only Canada's NAP goals explicitly mention peace operations (as opposed to peacebuilding or peace processes or other aspects). Finally, the goal of New Zealand's NAP is unique in focusing on the role of women within the country – those working within government and civil society, but also in society broadly speaking – as well as women in the region and globally.

Breakdown of Objectives & Initiatives/Actions

Most NAPS include a number of thematic areas that are meant to identify the areas where countries will focus their work. In many NAPS up to now, these areas have been based on the four pillars identified in UNSC (United Nations Security Council) Resolution 1325 – participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery.

Eight of the 10 NAPs reviewed used the four pillars, but all with the exception of Canada and the Netherlands, added one or more additional theme(s).

- ▪ <u>Australia</u> added 'normative'.

- ▪ <u>Ireland</u> added 'empowerment' and 'promotion'.

- ▪ <u>New Zealand</u> added 'peacebuilding'.

- ▪ <u>Sweden</u> added 'leadership and expertise'.

- ▪ <u>The UK</u> added 'building national capacity'.

- ▪ <u>The US</u> added 'national integration and institutionalization'.

The remaining two countries, Denmark and Norway, used a different approach when defining thematic areas. Denmark divided its initiatives first by implementing authority (Foreign Affairs, Police and Defence) and second by type of involvement, for example, under Foreign Affairs there is bilateral cooperation, regional programmes, multilateral cooperation, humanitarian, and Danish NGOs (non-governmental organizations). Norway's approach was similar, but focused on the type of intervention, i.e., peace processes and negotiations, peacebuilding, and humanitarian efforts.

While most NAPs use the thematic areas to categorise initiatives and indicators, the Australian NAP recognized that many initiatives cut across two or more of the five thematic areas identified and thus categorizes initiatives by strategy. The relevant thematic areas are then identified for each initiative.

Outlook of Actions

Our analysis also pointed to an interesting trend in terms of the outlook of initiatives – what we're defining here as internal vs. external. A common characteristic of NAPs by countries in the Global North (including Australia and New Zealand) is that they tend to be outward looking given the absence of internal conflict. However, several of the NAPs reviewed here include a central internal capacity building element, recognizing the importance of addressing policies and practices as part of public policy.

For example, two NAPs include a thematic area to that effect – the UK includes 'building national capacity' and the US includes 'national integration and institutionalization'. The UK NAP includes three indicators and two outputs which seek to "[ensure] that decision makers at all levels have the information, skills, and resources they need to make gender-sensitive, evidence-based decisions on WPS" and are "transparent whenever possible about decisions related to the NAP". Actions include increasing resources to WPS, encouraging employment of women in government roles, developing implementation plans and publishing yearly reports.

The US NAP for its part calls on the institutionalization of a gender sensitive approach to its diplomatic, development, and defense related work via interagency coordination, policy development, and enhanced training and education. This is to be achieved through improved policy frameworks, enhanced staff capacity, accountability mechanisms and an evaluative process.

Denmark's NAP also includes an important focus on internal capacity building for WPS with significant emphasis being placed on the police and military including recruitment of female police officers to international missions, including leadership positions; ensuring training efforts are in line with maintaining the number of deployed female police officers at all levels, ensuring that the perspectives of UNSCR 1325 are always incorporated in the course program, strengthening the education within the armed forces regarding gender issues; and continuing to work actively to increase the number of women in the armed forces.

It is also worth distinguishing between internal actions that support external initiatives (i.e., capacity for police, military and civilians as described above) and internal actions that address domestic issues.

This dichotomy in terms of internal actions is extremely important and highlights a growing discussion with respect to the outlook of initiatives. While initiatives like increasing women's representation within the police and military and building the capacity of government departments to integrate UNSCR 1325 are a given as part of most NAPs, other, more domestically-focused initiatives, are still cause for debate by governments and civil society alike.

Issues such as the missing and murdered Indigenous women here in Canada, the security and protection of women refugees, domestic violence and human trafficking are all part of the larger WPS agenda. Other issues such as public education on WPS and greater peace education in schools have also been identified as important contributors to the realizations of the WPS agenda. For example, while a major part of the Australian NAP is focused on internal capacity building of the Australian military, police, civilians and civil society, and humanitarian actors, while strengthening institutional policies, it also includes support for domestic non-governmental organisations and international organisations to engage in peace and security initiatives and raise awareness of UNSCR 1325. The NAP also encourages a greater understanding of WPS among the Australian public, which is absent from other NAPs reviewed.

Identifying Focus Countries

Out of the 10 NAPs reviewed, 6 countries identified focus countries/bodies, namely Norway, Sweden, Netherlands, the UK, the US and Denmark. The US and Danish NAPs went as far as identifying specific actions in the focus countries, including indicators. The most prevalent focus countries were: Afghanistan, Colombia, DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo), Iraq, Myanmar, Palestine, South Sudan and Syria. Whereas most countries identified between 6-10 focus countries, both the US and Denmark had a significantly longer list.

- Denmark: Afghanistan, Kenya, Lebanon, Mali, Myanmar, Nepal, Palestine, Somalia, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, Syria + 4 regional programs and 7 multilateral cooperation frameworks.

- Norway: Afghanistan, Colombia, Myanmar, Palestine and South Sudan plus the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region;

- Sweden: DRC, Liberia, Mali, Somalia, Afghanistan, Myanmar (Burma), Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ukraine, Colombia, Iraq, Palestine, Syria

- The Netherlands: Afghanistan, Colombia, DRC, Iraq, Libya, South Sudan, Syria, Yemen

- The UK: Afghanistan, Burma, DRC, Libya, Somalia, Syria. Also incl. efforts in multilateral institutions: the United Nations (UN), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), European Union (EU), and African Union (AU).

- The US: Columbia (GBV efforts); Cameroon, Central African Republic, DRC, Iraq, Liberia, Niger, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine (countering violent extremism); Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso, Burma (leadership).

Monitoring, Evaluation and Coordination

Most countries developed a framework that includes regular reporting. Generally, the responsible departments establish a working group who oversee evaluation and reporting. Only Ireland includes civil society representation and participation in monitoring and coordination. There, an independently chaired monitoring group consisting of 50% of civil society meets regularly and reports, but also has the power to modify the plan. Only the UK has dedicated budget for external evaluations. None of the countries mention reports being tabled in Parliament.

- Australia: Reports every 2 years, with interim and final report coordinated by WPS Inter-departmental working group.

- Canada: Yearly reports coordinated by Foreign Affairs with other departments feeding in.

- Ireland: Independent monitoring group chaired independently and consisting of 50 percent civil society; meets quarterly and reports every 2 years; has the power to modify the plan.

- New Zealand: Gender-balanced interagency governmental working group reports yearly to Minister on implementation, with civil society feeding in.

- Norway: Each ministry draws up a yearly work plan and implementation plan; one person within Foreign Affairs is coordinator with each ministry feeding into the report.

- Sweden: Foreign Affairs holds biannual meetings with other ministries; annual reports and mid-term review; final external evaluation.

- Netherlands: Country meetings by region to do gender analysis.

- UK: Funding for external and independent monitoring; final report; intergovernmental ownership.

- US: Interagency Policy Committee monitors and reviews actions; designated personnel in departments; implementation plans.

Civil Society Feedback

As part of our analysis, we spoke with representatives from civil society who had been involved in the drafting of their country's NAP in Australia, the Netherlands, Norway, the UK, the US and Sweden.

Overall, all of them felt that their NAP could have been much improved and general trends were easily identifiable.

CSO engagement

All the representatives felt disappointed by the consultation process for drafting the NAP. They were either not given enough time to respond or felt that their input wasn't valued and incorporated. Most governments did not incorporate formalized and regular engagement of civil society. Neither did they provide funding for CSOs to participate in the consultation process, implementation or reporting. In some instances, civil society was identified as stakeholders in information sharing.

Weak indicators and targets

All CSO representatives felt that the indicators in their country's NAP were weak. In general, there are no targets or baseline to measure the progress.

Lack of funding

All CSO representatives identified the lack of a dedicated budget for the implementation of the NAP as a key failure to ensure quality of implementation. The UK has dedicated funding for an external evaluation, but did not include funding for implementation.

Weak Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

While the M&E mechanisms and reporting standards differ widely between the various countries, overall M&E and reporting was done by government representatives without formalized input by civil society. Only Ireland's M&E working group included 50% of civil society. Several CSO representatives felt that an annual progress report should be tabled annually within parliament and an external evaluation should be done halfway through the implementation.

Importance of a national focus

Several CSO representatives stressed the importance of the inclusion of a national focus to their NAP both in terms of capacity building of domestic institutions but also in terms of addressing domestic issues that have a WPS angle to them. Few NAPs include strong representation and involvement from diaspora, refugees, and women coming from different countries as part of consultations and implementation. In fact, one of the gaps identified in the Australian NAP is its limited focus on and support for women's participation and involvement at all levels in the country. CSO representatives highlighted the importance of focusing on the prevention of conflict "at home" pointing to the importance of viewing violence as a continuum and of addressing current pressing situations (including anti-Muslim rhetoric, as well as discrimination and violence directed toward specific communities of people, etc.) as important aspects to realizing the goals of the WPS agenda everywhere.