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Twenty years of implementing UNSCR 1325 and the women, peace and security agenda: Lessons from the field

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Executive summary

This policy paper offers donors, national governments and peace practitioners practically orientated insights into some of the challenges to, and opportunities for, ensuring the effective implementation of the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda.

Drawing on a stock-taking exercise of International Alert's 20-year history working with women peacebuilders on the ground, it highlights the importance of engaging with men and masculinities to address conservative patriarchal gender norms and institutional socio-political constraints, which constitute one of the major obstacles to a full implementation of the WPS agenda.

It recommends supporting the mainstreaming of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325¹ National Action Plans (NAPs) into national policies and planning frameworks, as well as contributing to their adequate funding to ensure that they are fully implemented. Encouraging strategic engagement between national governments and local women's rights organisations and networks that form the linchpin for the advancement of the WPS agenda is also key to promoting political engagement and participation of women.

Moreover, there is a need to re-politicise the WPS agenda, which was primarily conceived as a feminist political project. This means adopting a transformative approach that puts gender equality and equal participation of men and women in leadership positions back at the heart of the agenda. This includes leadership positions in conflict-resolution and political processes at all levels of society.

Introduction

October 2020 will mark the 20th anniversary of the landmark UNSCR 1325. Twenty years on since the adoption of the resolution, there are persistent barriers preventing meaningful progress in the implementation of the WPS agenda, despite women continuing to be disproportionately affected by conflict, violence and political instability. In recent years, there has been a decrease in women's participation in peace processes, peace negotiations and political settlements led by the United Nations. In 2018, most of the UN-led or co-led ceasefire and peace agreements processes had no specific provisions on women and

gender. Five years on from the three peace and security reviews in 2014–2015,² only 50% of the recommendations on WPS have progressed, and only two recommendations out of 30 have been fully implemented.³ In his 2019 report on Women, Peace and Security, the Secretary General of the United Nations admitted that: *"there remain a stark contrast between rhetoric and reality, where previously agreed commitments have not been matched by action"*.⁴

The 20th Anniversary of 1325 will take place amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which is threatening efforts to address broader structural gender inequalities and promote peace, two key targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the WPS agenda. With attention diverted towards COVID-19 responses, local peacebuilders, who are already facing numerous challenges in their work, fear reductions in financial and technical support from international donors.⁵ Yet while the COVID-19 crisis presents multiple challenges, it can also offer a gateway for change; an opportunity to shift power to local peacebuilders and change the way of working in support of the WPS agenda. Therefore, the 20th Anniversary represents a critical opportunity to not only review the persistent barriers to the implementation of the WPS agenda, but also offer insights into how the WPS agenda has been experienced and implemented on the ground by peacebuilders in fragile and conflict-affected states, and the obstacles they are facing. As we celebrate this anniversary, one thing is clear: the perspectives of women peacebuilders on the frontline must be at the front and centre.

Alert has been involved in the WPS agenda since the outset. In 1999, Alert launched the global advocacy campaign *"Women Building Peace: From the Village Council to the Negotiating Table"*, which first called for a UN Security Council Resolution on women's experiences and contributions during armed violence.

This policy brief draws on a stock-taking exercise of Alert's 20-year history working with women peacebuilders on the ground, to present and discuss some of the lessons learned in implementing the WPS agenda in 10 fragile and conflict-affected states, namely Nepal, Myanmar, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Tajikistan. This research identified a range of cross-cutting issues regarding the implementation of WPS, both challenges and opportunities. The findings emphasised the value of the WPS agenda and NAPs as normative frameworks for the advancement and enshrining of women's rights around the four pillars of the WPS agenda, namely participation, prevention, protection,



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In Nigeria, Alert supports the reintegration of survivors of violence by Boko Haram back into their communities by training community and religious leaders in providing dialogue, stigma reduction and conflict-resolution support in their communities.

and relief and recovery, in the 10 countries. However, key challenges persist, in particular the continued prevalence of patriarchal gender norms, lack of political will from national government and global governance institutions, insufficient resourcing, and lack of strategic engagement between national governments and local women's rights organisations and networks that are the linchpin for the advancement of the WPS agenda. These challenges are presented and discussed below.

1. It is essential to address patriarchal gender norms and institutional socio-political constraints that constitute a major obstacle to a full implementation of the WPS agenda

Patriarchal gender norms and political and cultural conservatism that marginalise women's voices and

suppress equal participation in decision-making processes have always been at the heart of the difficulties of fully implementing 1325. This debate is even more important in conflict and fragile contexts, as conflict and crises often give rise to more rigid gender norms and stereotypes that men, women and those of other gender identities are expected to fulfil. All participants in the research highlighted that institutional norms and how these reflect the broader socio-cultural norms regarding gender equality, both at the community level and national government and international institutions levels, play a significant role in mediating the efficacy of WPS implementation.

At the community level, this frequently took the form of various types of 'pushback' against women who are involved in advancing women's participation and protection and their role in violence prevention. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, for instance, the patriarchal values of male family members in particular meant that women were actively either discouraged or blocked from accessing WPS-related initiatives, or had to get permission from their husbands to attend related meetings. Where women do participate, they still often face concerted backlash in the form of harassment, violence and stigmatisation.

The issue of backlash from their local communities arose as one of the most pressing challenges women peace activists are facing in their work to advance the WPS agenda. Without addressing community-level norms and expectations that justify the subjugation and marginalisation of women as active agents in community mobilisation, the implementation of the WPS agenda on the ground will remain piecemeal.

The highly masculine nature of governmental working spaces and cultures is another pressing challenge.

Women's participation in government institutions and political decision-making remains relatively low in the 10 countries under review. In Nigeria and Myanmar, for instance, women held only 8% and 3.7% of ministerial positions, respectively.⁶ Representation in national parliaments is slightly better, with women making up over 30% of parliamentarians in Burundi and Nepal.⁷ Despite this numerical progress, the public and political space remains overwhelmingly male dominated, and many women who operate in these spaces struggle to have a voice and experience pushback when trying to promote a women's rights agenda.

Ultimately, this results in the manifestation of social norms wherein the insights and contributions of women and women's rights advocates, and indeed any actor either explicitly or implicitly challenging patriarchal norms, are seen as less credible. In such contexts, the institutionalisation of male power in government can mean that, where women have been visible within the sphere of high politics, their roles have tended to replicate those being enacted in the domestic sphere, emphasising their gendered role as caregivers. This undermines their desire to be taken seriously as political players and also has significant implications for the advancement of the WPS agenda within those spaces.

There is also a need to counter conservative socio-political norms within global governance institutions to make progress on the WPS agenda. Discourses about women's rights are becoming notably less progressive within institutions of global governance, with many arguing that backsliding on WPS commitments and progress is not just possible, but likely.⁸ This backsliding is clearly reflected in the differences of implementation progress between the 'participation' and 'protection' components of the WPS agenda.

There has been very little implementation by UN member states of the WPS pillar on participation, which focuses on women's participation in all levels of decision-making on peace and security issues. Twenty years on from the adoption of UNSCR 1325, women are still systematically excluded from peace talks. The gender audit of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Great Lakes Region (PSCF) that Alert conducted in 2015 revealed that the process that led to the signing of this important peace accord for the region in 2014 lacked any formal representation of women.⁹ In 2018, there were very few to no women in peace and ceasefire talks in the Central African Republic, Libya or Yemen.

By contrast, there is notably more momentum and consensus on the 'protection' pillar, which was articulated specifically to address the issue of sexual violence, and is considered less politically sensitive and more firmly anchored within the mandate of the UN Security Council by some member states.¹⁰ This, many argue, reflects geopolitical sensitivities and issues of sovereignty, as well as internal political dynamics and ideological divisions between Security Council members, on issues pertaining to peacebuilding, gender equality and the understanding of security, and shows how these divisions are institutionalised within the UN system.¹¹ For many women's rights defenders and peace and security activists, the emphasis on the issue of protection is also linked to the fact that women continue to be perceived and treated only as victims who need protection from sexual violence, while at the same time ignoring their agency and overlooking the diverse roles they play in their communities.

Moreover, countries with regressive attitudes towards women, but also civil society more broadly, sitting on the Security Council have actively contributed to the WPS agenda, while also making it more difficult to implement it in their own countries. For example, Azerbaijan was president of the Council when resolution 2122¹² was adopted but in the same year started a reported crackdown on civil society.¹³ Gender norms in many conflict-affected countries and contexts reflected in institutional cultures, including at the international level, serve as critical obstacles to effective implementation of the WPS agenda. Institutionally embedded social conservatism around gender equality poses an especially salient barrier to the WPS agenda, given its explicitly feminist underpinnings that promote gender equality.¹⁴

2. Strategic engagement with men and masculinities is essential to challenge the patriarchal normative framework and transform patriarchal gender norms and institutionalised male privilege

Given that patriarchal gender norms and institutionalised male privilege are widely recognised as being major roadblocks to WPS implementation, there has been growing recognition, particularly among WPS practitioners, of **the importance of working with men and masculinities to achieve the gender equality and women's empowerment goals embedded in the WPS agenda**. Indeed, developing a genuinely gendered approach to understanding conflict and peace is impossible without bringing men into the analysis, especially without critically examining men's relationships with violence. Men (especially younger or marginalised men) are often socially, culturally and politically conditioned, by other men but also by women, to be more liable to engage in public and private physical violence and to be exposed to physical violence in the public sphere. Alert's research on gender and violent extremism in the Sahel region found that many women actively participate in the war effort by encouraging men to join jihadist armed groups, in order for them to fulfil their allocated social roles and responsibilities associated with hegemonic masculinities.¹⁵ Therefore, the full and successful implementation of the WPS agenda and gender-transformational programming on the ground relies on an engagement with men and masculinities to create enabling spaces and environments to address discriminatory social norms and the root causes of gender inequality, such as patriarchy.

However, there are limited references to men and masculinities in the WPS agenda. Only two Security Council Resolutions (2106 and 2242, adopted in 2013 and 2015, respectively) explicitly mention men and boys. Resolution 2106 notes that men and boys can be enlisted as potential partners in the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), while also recognising for the first time that men and boys are also affected by SGBV. Likewise, Resolution 2242 reiterates the importance of engaging men and boys as partners in promoting women's participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.



Campaigners call to 'Implement UNSCR 1325 Now' during a march on International Women's Day in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Peace activists on the ground have been working with men for many years, particularly in highly patriarchal and conservative societies. However, many of them feel that their experiences of engaging with either national or international WPS architecture, including donor funding mechanisms, has not always incentivised comprehensive engagement with men and boys. Yet, working with men in some contexts is critical, even when not incentivised by donors, for example, in Pakistan or Afghanistan, where some women peacebuilding organisations are working with male champions but also with conservative mullahs. Their decision to engage with them is based on their understanding of the cultural sensitivities in their communities and their recognition that achieving transformational change on gender equality and the advancement of women's rights was necessarily dependent on an engagement with the broader structures and actors that inhibit such progress, with men representing a critical component in this.

Therefore, donor support for gender equality and women's empowerment in conflict-affected contexts should reach out specifically to, and engage effectively with, a range of integral stakeholders. Facilitating work with men, resisters and powerholders to highlight, challenge and transform institutionalised male privilege is a key avenue for donors to support in the strengthening of the essential conditions for the effective functioning of gender equality mechanisms that underpin the effective implementation of WPS at the local level.

3. To fully implement the WPS agenda, it is vital to properly resource WPS work and mainstream it into wider national policies and planning frameworks

Across most of the 10 countries targeted in the research, there is a noticeable lack of clear strategy from national governments, on how to fully implement the WPS agenda. NAPs are the main tools used to promote and implement the agenda at the national level. They are also regarded as potentially valuable tools for ensuring accountability of implementation by national governments.¹⁶ Eight out of the 10 countries reviewed have developed NAPs, and some of them have even gone through second or third revisions of their plans. However, there are several persistent challenges, gaps and constraints in the national support structures across the research contexts. The NAPs are not mainstreamed into wider national and sectorial policies and political frameworks. They are not sufficiently linked to existing national gender policies and are often developed and promoted in parallel. A combination of structural factors explains the difficulties in fully implementing the WPS agenda in the 10 countries.

The first one is the lack of political will and firm commitment to prioritising gender equality within government structures and mechanisms responsible for advancing WPS nationally. This is consistent with the broader global evidence concerning the operating context for national women's machineries, which shows that it is frequently challenging to build the political determination to address harmful cultural norms and practices that underpin the systemic, cultural and direct violence towards women.¹⁷ This impacts the effective advancement of the WPS agenda implementation through the mechanisms of

government. For most academics and activists working on women, peace and security, political will is a precursor to an effective WPS NAP.¹⁸ To them, strong and sustained political will implies that national governments recognise the importance of the NAPs, are committed to their progress and take action to implement them.¹⁹ Indeed, the extent to which the government, WPS advocate groups and women's organisations within civil society will succeed in promoting WPS implementation depends upon, among other things, whether the state and its bureaucracies have the will and capacity to enforce change in the culture and practices of its bureaucracies, and whether the public service has internalised a commitment to gender equity.²⁰

The lack of political will in national governments to advance women's participation, protection, prevention of violence, and relief and recovery in conflict can be especially notable in conflict-affected situations, where 'hard' security issues, often the purview of male-dominated institutions, are seen as having over-riding importance compared to other issues. The lack of political will is deeply rooted in and legitimised by the institutional and socio-political norms, discussed in the previous sections. These socially and discriminatory social norms institutionalise male privilege and traditional power structures within national governments. The issue is particularly stark for the promotion of the participation pillar of the WPS agenda at the national level. According to women peace activists in Burundi, the participation pillar is the one where they have the least impact, because of the lack of resolve on the part of the political and administrative leaders.

Secondly, there are widespread **inadequacies in the knowledge and capacity of civil servants** in ministries and other national government bodies on NAPs, as well as a significant shortage of WPS awareness and technical knowledge at the regional and local administrative levels. There is a connection between this lack of capacity and poorly functioning governmental bodies that are responsible for underpinning WPS implementation. Yet the expertise and also commitment of the civil service, and mid-level civil servants in particular, is essential to successful implementation of the NAPs as they are the ones who "can drive buy-in and broad ownership among ministries and agencies across the government".²¹ It should be noted that these capacity gaps within those responsible for supporting WPS-related delivery mechanisms, such as social care provision for example, risk leading not only to ineffective support, but also to doing harm.

Some progress has been made around the inclusion of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes in NAPs. Most

NAPs from the 10 countries studied contained reasonable M&E frameworks with broadly defined activities, indicators, timeframes and responsible parties. However, the **lack of sufficient resourcing of WPS remains a chronic and critical challenge** for the effectiveness of governmental mechanisms for advancing WPS. In 2015, the UN Global Study on the WPS agenda found that there was a “consistent, striking disparity between policy commitments to gender equality and women’s empowerment, and the financial allocations to achieve them”.²² As of June 2020, only 28 (33 percent) of the 84 NAPs adopted by 44% of all UN member states included an allocated budget for WPS activities.²³

The lack of funding is one of the main reasons why the 1325 NAPs are not properly mainstreamed within national policies. In Burundi, for example, the revised 1325 NAP (2017–2021), also called the ‘second generation NAP’, has still not been integrated in the planning and budgeting of relevant government departments and agencies three years after its adoption. Due to the lack of funds, there is weak ownership of the NAP by Burundian state institutions. Similarly, in the neighbouring DRC, funds were allocated by donors for the development of a NAP in 2010. The action plan was revised twice, in 2013 and 2018. In 2015, the government established a 1325 National Secretariat for the monitoring of the implementation of the NAP, followed by the opening of 1325 Provincial Secretariats in 10 out of the 26 provinces of the country. However, these structures are not properly operational because no funds were allocated to the implementation of the 1325 NAP in the national and provincial budgets. Funding to support the implementation of the 1325 NAPs at national levels is critical. Essentially, NAP implementation is more likely to be effective if well resourced, both in terms of funding and human capacity, and if it contains specific M&E expectations and detailed timelines.

Another main constraint concerns the **lack of strategic partnerships between government mechanisms and the women’s constituency in civil society**. A robust and meaningful engagement with women peace activists and women’s rights organisations would significantly strengthen the position and quality of the gender equality agenda in government, while simultaneously sensitising it to the needs of female citizens. However, in practice, civil society organisations (CSOs) often experience a notable lack of cooperation with relevant government structures.

This is a pattern that is reflected more widely in global literature on national women’s mechanisms.²⁴ This lack

of strategic cooperation between the national bodies responsible for advancing the WPS agenda and women’s networks and organisations represents a significant missed opportunity and one major area that international developing partners might consider fruitful avenues for future support. Indeed, agencies with a mandate to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment tend to be more effective when they engage in collaborative ‘strategic partnerships’ with strong and developed women’s networks and organisations, including NGOs and grassroots movements, but also researchers on women’s, peace and security issues, as well as women in political parties.²⁵ Further, and of crucial importance, these strategic partnerships also serve to raise the profiles of such women’s networks and organisations, and recognise them as central stakeholders in the advancement of the WPS agenda, as well as the broader social change that is the overarching goal.

4. Supporting women’s rights organisations is essential as they play a critical role in implementing the WPS agenda and UNSCR resolutions on WPS

Women’s organisations and networks at national and grassroots levels are critical to maintaining progress on the implementation of WPS in their various conflict contexts. Therefore, it is important that international donors provide continuous and substantive technical and financial support to these organisations.

One initiative that has been successful at strengthening the gender equality movement over the past 20 years has been donor facilitation of cross-learning opportunities and exchanges at the regional, national and international levels. In the early 2000s, for instance, the Afghan women’s movement gained strength from being supported by donors to connect with the international community advancing gender equality and women’s rights, when opportunities to gain these insights remained limited within the country itself. Donors also created opportunities for exchange between local women’s groups in conflict regions to learn from each other’s successful methods and approaches. Another form of ‘best practice’ was local actors’ access to national-level bodies, structures and mechanisms. In the DRC, for example, donors were key players in ensuring that women’s rights organisations were



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A local women’s group in Afghanistan collaborates with male champions to address barriers to women’s participation and protection, as part of Alert’s ‘Strengthening women’s role in peace’ project.

invited to participate in the development of the 1325 NAP. While many WPS practitioners have strong commitment to, and have demonstrated impact in, engaging with relevant governmental structures and processes at the local, regional and state levels, their participation in WPS-related processes at the national level required donor support.

The most advanced way in which donors can genuinely and sustainably support the implementation of the WPS agenda, however, is through the clear prioritisation of funding for women’s organisations and networks. Long-term and core funding enables organisations to operate in challenging contexts and to be more resilient, with access to emergency funds. This is even more important in the current COVID-19 crisis, where funds are already being diverted from local peacebuilding organisations and their work. WPS implementation carried out by women’s peacebuilding networks and CSOs are at acute risk.

Finally, donors need to recognise the “shrinking space”²⁶ and dangers faced by women’s rights organisations, women’s

rights defenders, peacebuilders and the broader civil society in both conflict and non-conflict contexts. Some of the local NGOs implementing WPS initiatives are facing significant repercussions, both directly in the form of harassment but also more systemically through the withdrawal of funding, by dismantling legal protections or by hollowing out support systems. It is up to the international community to stand in solidarity with women peacebuilders and human rights defenders to defend and protect the critical work that they do.

5. Adopt an intersectional approach to reflect the complexities of women’s identities

Overly narrow approaches to women as a homogenous group do not account for the variations in experiences of different women in conflict contexts, and serve to reinforce

negative and restrictive gender norms, as well as negating agency. A more intersectional view of the hierarchies within and across women must account for how gender interacts with other identity factors, such as age, social class, ethnicity, caste, sexuality, marital status and, among other locally relevant identifiers, (dis)ability.

Alert's review of the implementation of Afghanistan's NAP on WPS conducted in 2019 illustrates that a significant amount of work on WPS still fails to ensure the participation of women from the various social hierarchies in the country, with strong biases towards inclusion of elite women and the amplification of their voices.²⁷ This indicates a push for women's representation that is not only very top-down, but one that is also failing to make the impact it seeks beyond a small sub-section of Afghan women who are able to access and participate in high-level political processes.²⁸ Practitioners interviewed for this research called for international donors supporting work on WPS to take a more proactive role in emphasising the importance of bringing non-elite women into WPS processes, programming and consultation.

In addition, **there is a shortage of programming that recognises, and is designed to consider, the unique experiences of those living with disability in conflict.** This is despite the fact that conflict-related violence, through armed violence or SGBV, and the associated lack of access to medical services, increases the number of people living with disabilities.²⁹ This is compounded by the fact that those living with disabilities are also more likely to experience violence within conflict. Nevertheless, the specific needs and vulnerabilities of such women, as well as their insights and contributions, continue to be frequently omitted from WPS initiatives in conflict-affected communities.

Sexual and gender minorities (SGM) are also missing from WPS programming on the ground. Their needs, vulnerabilities and agencies remain severely underrepresented in peacebuilding processes. This is rooted in deeply held taboos and acute stigmatisation. Yet, conflict contexts can be highly precarious periods for SGM communities, who frequently face increased harassment and exclusion not only from armed conflict actors but also from civilians, including close family members. Thus, while recognising the sensitivities of working on issues of SGM in many contexts, approaches to gender in conflict-affected contexts, including the WPS framework, must be broadened and deepened to not only refer to women and girls, or to women, men, girls and boys, but to expand this to cover all gender identities to highlight the multiplicity and particularity of vulnerabilities and needs faced by marginalised groups such as SGM.

Recommendations to international donors, national governments and policy-makers

Re-politicising the WPS agenda

The bureaucratic and technical approaches to the implementation of 1325 and WPS adopted by international and national institutions have emptied 1325 and the WPS agenda of their political substance. There is a need to reclaim the political dimension of the agenda, which was primarily conceived as a feminist political project. This means:

- 1. Putting gender equality and equal participation of men and women in leadership positions** in conflict-resolution and political processes at all levels of society back at the heart of the WPS agenda.
- 2. Adopting a transformative agenda that will make the impact of 1325 and WPS felt by the wider community** of women, men and gender minorities affected by conflict and violence in their daily lives.

Addressing patriarchal social norms as barriers to the full implementation of the WPS agenda

- 1. Recognise how patriarchal social norms block progress on the advancement of the WPS agenda,** and broader gender equality goals, at the communal, institutional, national governmental and international levels.
- 2. Actively address conservative political social norms at the international and national levels** and ensure that the agenda remains progressive with gender equality and the rights of women, girls and sexual minorities at the core of all decisions.
- 3. Support social norms transformation initiatives at the community level,** to address the social barriers that impede the advancement of the WPS agenda. This could **include awareness-raising programmes and community dialogue on discriminatory social norms and practices, the social construction of masculinities and femininities, and deeper transformational approaches.** These initiatives should bring together all the relevant stakeholders in the communities, such as religious and traditional leaders,

women's and youth organisations, service providers, local administrative authorities and security forces stationed in these communities.

4. Support initiatives to engage more strategically with men in positions of power and 'authority', including those who set community norms, such as religious authorities, traditional leaders, local officials, central or local-level political party leaders. Facilitate direct engagement with the diversity of stakeholders whose participation is required to effect change in gender power relations and to avoid doing harm, with the view to highlighting, challenging and transforming institutionalised male privilege. This would strengthen the essential conditions for the effective implementation of the WPS agenda.

Supporting the mainstreaming of the WPS agenda into national policies and planning frameworks

1. Initiate bilateral political dialogue with national governments on the importance of mainstreaming gender equality principles into their national policies as an integral part of donors' diplomatic and development strategies. This should be underpinned by an understanding of partner incentives with strategies and support adapted accordingly. This is also an essential way in which donors can show their own commitment to the WPS agenda.

2. Adopt a cross-government approach to ensure that all relevant ministries and departments are included in the implementation process of 1325 NAPs, and that the WPS agenda is thoroughly mainstreamed within various ministries and departments' own policies and programmes.

3. Support capacity-building at all levels of national government and the state. Specifically, potentially fruitful actions to achieve this include ensuring that programmatic design of WPS activities and NAPs is context-specific, based on thorough and rigorous gender analysis and conflict-sensitivity principles; developing curricula for implementing the WPS agenda at the country level, which will be designed for specific stakeholders such as legal practitioners, parliamentarians and national human rights commissions. Additional opportunities for donors include the provision of bespoke technical support to implement their WPS commitments.

4. Support the establishment and functioning of accountability mechanisms as well as mechanisms to track and monitor progress on national-level implementation of the 1325 NAPs. It is important to support institutions and structures that can play oversight roles such as national parliaments, parliamentary committees, cross-party women's parliamentary caucuses where they exist, political parties and national human rights commissions. National parliaments should also be encouraged and supported in establishing fora on WPS issues, bringing parliamentarians together with civil servants and CSOs.

5. Support cooperation and engagement between beneficiary governments and women's organisations from civil society. Opportunities to support partner governments to strengthen and operationalise this engagement include providing capacity-building trainings and materials that focus specifically on developing a concrete plan and framework for collaborating and engaging with women's organisations and broader civil society; holding regular meetings with these organisations to build trust and understanding; ensuring that women's organisations and networks are involved in the design of projects on gender equality; and enlisting women's organisations and networks and academia to support data collection and analysis.

6. Contributing to adequate funding for NAPs is key to ensuring that they are fully implemented. In this regard, it is important to strengthen the capacity and expertise of national governments on gender budgeting. The costing for implementing the NAPs should be included from the very beginning in the NAPs' development process. This is critical to bridge the gap between rhetorical commitments and impact on WPS.

Supporting local movements that are essential to the implementation of the WPS agenda on the ground

1. Recognise that the success of the implementation of UNSCR 1325 is inextricably linked to successful support of local women's rights organisations and grassroots women's movements and women's peacebuilding organisations.

2. Ensure that women's and broader CSOs are included in monitoring processes. They are an important source of information, and their presence will increase the transparency and accountability of the monitoring

process. In that sense, it is important that NAP implementation monitoring boards are established with half of the members from the government side, and half from women's organisations and CSOs. Mechanisms for civil society participation in monitoring should be outlined in the NAP and institutionalised by identifying the government unit or department responsible.

3. Prioritise the provision of technical support and capacity-building for local women's organisations that are committed to implementing UNSCR 1325.

This should also involve facilitating partnerships and exchange opportunities between national women's organisations and networks committed to advancing the WPS agenda and other experienced regional and international actors.

4. Institute an explicit and clear commitment to increasing WPS funding for women's organisations that is flexible, long term and accessible.

Access to flexible and stable funding is a critical mediating factor in maintaining the strength of grassroots women's movements, particularly during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Prioritise the provision of funding models that are known to reinforce collaboration between women's networks and organisations, rather than competition.

Funding models must reinforce women's organisations' abilities to collaborate more, mobilising funds in ways that harmonise various local initiatives, focusing on the benefits of consortium modalities.

Taking a comprehensive and intersectional approach to the WPS agenda

1. Conduct gender analysis that integrates an intersectional approach that is sensitive to the variations and hierarchies within and across women, girls, men and boys, including those that do not subscribe to these binary identities (SGMs) and people with disabilities.

2. Take a lead in incentivising and promoting WPS programming and implementation to broaden inclusion criteria to take an intersectional and context-specific perspective of gender. Requesting such analysis of others is not sufficient; the provision of guidance and trainings is critical.

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About the Peace Research Partnership

Saferworld, Conciliation Resources and International Alert are collaborating on a research programme that generates evidence and lessons for policy-makers and practitioners on how to support peaceful, inclusive change in conflict-affected areas. Funded by UK aid from the UK government, the research focuses on economic development, peace processes, institutions and gender drivers of conflict. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.

Endnotes

- 1 UNSCR 1325 was adopted in October 2000. It was the first time ever the Security Council addressed the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and stressed the importance of women's full and equal participation in peace and security. UNSCR 1325 has been augmented by nine resolutions: 1820 (2009), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013) and 2464 (2019), addressing sexual violence and abuse against women and children in conflict zones; resolutions 1889 (2009) and 2122 (2013), calling for an increase in women's participation in peace processes and aiming to strengthen women's roles in all stages of conflict prevention and resolutions; resolution 2242 (2015), which encourages assessments of strategies and resources to improve implementation of 1325; and finally resolution 2493 (2019), reaffirming commitment to full implementation of all the above resolutions.
- 2 The three UN peace and security reviews conducted in 2014–2015, which focused on peace operations, peacebuilding and implementation of UNSCR 1325, highlighted an inadequate recognition among member states and within the UN system of the potential of fully integrating a gender perspective into peace and security processes. See Security Council Report, Women, peace and security: Closing the Security Council's implementation gap, 2, 2017
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Cover photo: Alert's Zindagii Shoista ('Living with dignity') project in Tajikistan is helping to protect at-risk women from violence within the family and transform patriarchal attitudes by creating a more positive environment and encouraging women's increased involvement in financial decision-making. © Aziz Satorri/International Alert

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