National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security in the OSCE Area

The first United Nations Security Council resolution on Women Peace and Security (WPS) was adopted in 2000 and underscored the importance of including women in all decisions related to peace and conflict. The implementation of this and the following WPS resolutions has however been patchy and inconsistent. The OSCE therefore initiated an analysis of the National Action Plans to enhance national WPS implementation by 27 of their participating states. A summary of the recommendations and tools for action for National Action Plan improvement are provided in this policy brief.

Brief Points

- National Action Plans for the implementation of the Women Peace and Security agenda from 27 OSCE countries are analyzed.
- The plans vary substantially in length, detail and ambition. They have been analyzed in terms of the pillars of the Women Peace and Security agenda: Participation, prevention, protection and relief and recovery.
- Many National Action Plans could be improved by taking into account a few simple recommendations.

Christin Ormhaug
Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)
In 2000 the United Nations Security Council passed resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325) which calls for greater inclusion of women in all decisions related to international peace and conflict. This has been important in order to create new norms regarding women’s role at the peace table, and it has been followed by six later Security Council resolutions on the same topic. Together these seven resolutions comprise the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

Fourteen years later, however, there are concerns over the slow implementation of this agenda. Progress on the ground is very incoherent, with different actors involved moving at very different speed. Two main reasons for the lack of progress can be discerned:

- Firstly there is a lack of capacity and commitment of some of the actors involved in the implementation of conflict prevention, peace negotiation and subsequent reconstruction efforts.
- Secondly there are insufficient resources allocated to implementing the WPS agenda. Both the manpower and the financial resources made available are insufficient for such a large task.

To enhance implementation, the UN has therefore called for the adoption of National Action Plans (NAPs) or other national strategies in order to implement these resolutions. NAPs have been launched as a way of highlighting the importance of the WPS agenda in different national policies and creating greater coherence among them. Such plans further have the potential to create greater national ownership of the agenda, as well as greater accountability.

### The OSCE and the Women Peace and Security agenda

The OSCE is the world’s largest regional security organization, with 57 participating States from Vancouver to Vladivostok. It comprises both Russia and the US, and its unique place as a meeting ground for the east and west has been visible during the ongoing crisis in Ukraine. The OSCE is an important regional player in early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. The WPS agenda is therefore important for the organization, and the OSCE has directly contributed to the development of NAPs amongst some of its participating States.

As of March 2014, 27 OSCE participating States had adopted NAPs for the implementation of the WPS agenda: Austria, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Norway, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom had already launched a second plan.

The lack of coherent implementation of the WPS agenda prompted the OSCE to undertake a study of the NAPs in their area. The study was undertaken by PRIO, in close collaboration with the OSCE. The outcome is an analysis of the NAPs in the OSCE area in terms of the four pillars of the WPS agenda (see below), and recommendations for States wishing to create or rewrite such plans. The recommendations following from the analysis are presented in the last section of this policy brief.

### Analysis of the plans

The NAPs from the 27 countries were analysed in terms of their inclusion of the four pillars of the WPS agenda:

- **Women’s participation in all peace, security and conflict-related matters;**
- **Inclusion of women and a gender perspective in the prevention of conflict and of gender-based or sexual violence;**
- **Protection of women and girls and their rights during conflict;**
- **Inclusion of women and a gender perspective in relief and recovery activities (including the prosecution of perpetrators of sexual and gender-based crimes and peace-building or peacekeeping activities).**

These four pillars are inherently connected. Women’s participation is perhaps the most important pillar, but including more women in peace and conflict related activities holds the potential to achieving greater gender-awareness in prevention and protection as well as relief and recovery activities. The pillars are not separate but can reinforce each other.

#### United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women Peace and Security

**UNSCR 1325 (2000)** is the first of the thematic resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. It encourages states to increase women’s participation in decision-making regarding peace and conflict and in preventing conflicts and violence against women and girls; to enhance protection of women and girls and their rights; and to integrate a gender perspective in relief and recovery activities.

**UNSCR 1820 (2008)** focuses on sexual violence in armed conflict. It states that rape and other forms of sexual violence are sometimes used as a tactic of war, and recognizes these atrocities as a possible war crime, a crime against humanity or a constitutative act of genocide.

**UNSCR 1888 (2009)** focuses on sexual violence in armed conflict and reinforces UNSCR 1820. It calls for the UN Secretary General to appoint a Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

**UNSCR 1890 (2009)** specifically deals with the role of women in post-conflict situations. It urges actors on different levels to ensure women are better represented in conflict resolution and peace processes.

**UNSCR 1960 (2010)** focuses on sexual violence in armed conflict, and expresses concern over the lack of progress on this issue. It calls for using sexual violence as a criterion for targeted sanctions against parties which perpetrate such violence.

**UNSCR 2106 (2013)** focuses on combating sexual violence in the context of armed conflict, calling on all parties to do more to combat these crimes. It further notes that the risk of arms being used to perpetuate gender-based violence is a criterion that exporting states shall consider, according to the new Arms Trade Treaty.

**UNSCR 2122 (2013)** reiterates commitments made in Resolution 1325. It focuses on women’s access to justice in transitional and post-conflict periods, including reparations to victims. It further emphasizes women’s empowerment and participation in all aspects of decision-making regarding conflict.
**National Action Plans**

A National Action Plan (NAP) is a strategy developed by a state to implement UNSCR 1325 and other resolutions of the Women Peace and Security agenda. Plans should contain concrete recommendations on how women should be included in all peace and conflict related decisions and processes, and how a gender perspective should be included in efforts to prevent conflict and sexual violence, protect women and girls, and in relief and recovery activities. They provide an opportunity to assess priorities for the states’ work both nationally and internationally and to coordinate relevant actors, including cooperation with civil society. Plans should contain clear goals, actions and responsibilities and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.

### Tools for Action for plan development

The analysis revealed that the NAPs varied greatly in all aspects, including in length, detail and ambition. And while plans ought to be tailored to national priorities, and therefore differ, there were nonetheless some lessons that could be applied more generally. A NAP in itself does not lead to change – it needs to be well thought out and have concrete actions that correspond well to the proposed goals. The following recommendations were identified in the study.

1. **Work with civil society, stakeholders and other partners**

   Civil society action was crucial in order to draw attention to this agenda and push for the first resolution in 2000. Various civil society organizations possess a lot of knowledge about Women Peace and Security issues and how they can be implemented, and should naturally be included as partners. The analysis of the NAPs showed however that states diverge greatly in how much they interact with civil society. Creating clear rules of engagement could help make the cooperation more fruitful for all parties.

   **Recommendation:** Cooperation with civil society is essential in the process of drafting and implementing a NAP. The selection of participating organizations should be transparent, and expectations of the level of input and discussion be clear.

2. **Create coordinating mechanisms**

   Different states have chosen different ways of coordinating their work on WPS. States reported that it is time-consuming to keep updated and push the agenda forward. The coordinator and/or coordinating mechanism should therefore receive adequate resources, and ideally not have this responsibility as an add-on to other tasks.

   **Recommendation:** A coordinating mechanism, most often led by a ministry, should be established. Which ministry is most suited to lead the work should be carefully considered.

3. **Create a baseline study**

   In line with the recommendation above, it is important to take stock of ongoing WPS related work that is done in the various government and civil society branches. Very many NAPs proposed to increase the number of women in different positions, including policy making positions as well as the security forces. However, in order to know if progress is made on this point, it is necessary to know how many women occupy such posts already. Only very few NAPs explicitly stated the number of women in these different positions.

   **Recommendation:** Collect information on Women, Peace and Security related work that is already carried out by ministries and civil society organizations. For instance, collect data on the number and positions of female employees in various sectors for the purposes of implementation and monitoring and include this in a baseline study to measure progress.

4. **Create tailored and focused NAP content**

   NAPs should be tailored to reflect national priorities, and may therefore vary substantially from one state to another. Many states have chosen to work with the pillar structure and organize content around these themes. However, the analysis showed that there was substantial confusion regarding which actions and priorities belong under which pillar, perhaps reflecting how intertwined they are. In some cases it was not clear how the proposed activities would lead to the stated goals. Many NAPs would therefore benefit from some clearer thinking regarding the pillar structure. The pillar that most states had emphasized was women’s participation in peace and conflict related activities, whereas prevention of conflict was the aspect that received the least attention.

   **Recommendation:**
   - **Participation:** Promoting women’s participation in decision-making regarding peace and conflict matters is essential to any action plan to implement the Women, Peace and Security agenda.
   - **Prevention:** Designing conflict prevention measures and plans for women’s participation in such activities is a major contribution to stability and to gender mainstreaming conflict response. Increasing awareness of sexual violence, creating reporting mechanisms and prosecuting offenders will help to prevent such abuses in the long term.
   - **Protection:** Protection of the human rights of women and girls, protection against sexual violence and the special protection needs of displaced women are key issues of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.
   - **Relief and recovery:** Women’s needs and interests should be taken into account when relief and recovery activities are undertaken.

5. **Include indicators or measurable goals, but stay flexible**

   In recent years there has been a lot of focus on creating indicators as a way of making goals more measurable. Indicators should be created at the start of the NAP process in order to be effective. There was a tendency towards more use of indicators in the newer NAPs.

   **Recommendation:** Goals should be clear yet adaptable to a changing environment. Select indicators and methods for monitoring that are realistic and possible to execute while still capturing key aspects of the work on Women, Peace and Security.

6. **Develop a timeline and prioritize**

   There was often a mix of short and long term goals and objectives in the plans, making execution and monitoring more difficult than necessary.

   **Recommendation:** Some goals are possible to obtain in the short term and therefore should have a clear timeline attached, whereas other goals (like behavioral change) are inherently
long-term and need sustained efforts. It is helpful to consider how much can collectively be achieved in the relative short time frame of the National Action Plan in order not to overburden institutions. This involves drawing up a list of priorities.

7. Include budget considerations

Only a minority of states presented a budget in the National Action Plan.

Recommendation: It is important to recognize that action to further the Women, Peace and Security agenda cannot be made without the allocation of a budget. This can involve looking at both the mechanisms for upholding and executing the NAP as well as implementing the actions outlined in the NAP. A balance should be struck between choosing specific allocation and financing through regular budget lines.

8. Outline clear responsibilities

The analysis revealed that many National Action Plans did not state clearly which entity is responsible for carrying out which task. Several plans simply said that ‘the Government’ is responsible for certain actions. While it is positive to mainstream gender issues across government actions, there is also a real risk that responsibility will be diffused.

Recommendation: Clear lines of responsibility are essential for tasks to be performed.

9. Monitor and evaluate progress and challenges

The NAPs varied substantially with regards to how transparent the monitoring and evaluation plans were. Some countries required reports to be delivered to parliament, whereas others did not mention monitoring at all.

Recommendation: Implementation of the plan needs to be monitored. Plans should be evaluated at regular intervals of about three to five years. Such evaluation also needs to consider the broader national context of the work of the NAP in order to be useful.

10. Update the action plans after some years

The Women Peace and Security agenda is continuously evolving, and new UN Security Council resolutions have been added over the years since 2000. The NAPs ought to reflect this, and be reviewed with regular intervals as some goals are achieved and new goals added. Seven countries included in the analysis had already had two National Action Plans adopted.

Recommendation: NAPs should be living documents, and therefore need to be updated on a regular basis.

11. Be prepared to meet obstacles

There was little mention in the NAPs of the difficulties inherent in creating change. It is however necessary to consider this aspect and have realistic plans for how obstacles can be overcome.

Recommendation: Building awareness of the importance of the Women, Peace and Security agenda and influencing attitudes and behaviors is always difficult and might encounter resistance. Therefore, it can be useful to develop an understanding of reasonable expected outcome/goals. That is, how much change is expected during the time period? Further, if we did not reach the expected outcome, we need to carefully analyze the reasons for it. Registering evidence of resistance should also be part of the monitoring task.

Notes

1 Austria (2007 and updated plan 2012); Belgium (2009); Bosnia-Herzegovina (2010); Canada (2010); Croatia (2011); Denmark (2005 and updated plan 2008); Estonia (2010); Finland (2008 and updated plan 2012); France (2010); Georgia (2011); Germany (2012); Iceland (2008 and updated plan 2013); Ireland (2011); Italy (2010); Kyrgyzstan (2013); Lithuania (2011); Netherlands (2007 and updated plan 2011); Norway (2006 and updated plan 2011); Portugal (2009); Serbia (2011); Slovenia (2011); Spain (2007); Sweden (2006 and updated plan 2009); Switzerland (2007 and updated plan 2010); the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (2013); United Kingdom (2011 and updated plan 2012); and United States (2011).