

Report on a Roundtable

1325 National Action Plans: Lessons from the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden

Ottawa, September 13th, 2016

Introduction

National Action Plans (NAPs) can be key tools in the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. As Canada looks to renew and revitalize its NAP, important lessons can be learned from the experience of other countries.

In order to share lessons and advance the discussion, the Embassies of the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, and the Women, Peace and Security Network-Canada (WPSN-C) with specific support from the Nobel Women's Initiative, hosted a Roundtable on September 13th, 2016.

The Swedish Ambassador H.E. Per Sjögren welcomed participants. Featured speakers also included the Norwegian Ambassador, H.E. Anne Kari Hansen Ovind, the Deputy Head of Mission of the Netherlands, Frederieke Quispel, and Anne Burgess of Global Affairs Canada.

The over 40 participants and observers included representatives from Global Affairs Canada, the Canadian Armed Forces, the RCMP, Status of Women Canada, and civil society organizations. The discussion was moderated by Beth Woroniuk, WPSN-C Coordinator.

Experts from the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden led the discussion. From the Netherlands, **Anne Kwakkenbos, of WO=MEN the Dutch Genderplatform**, highlighted the innovative structure of the Dutch plan, which includes civil society collaboration. From Norway, **Sine Vorland Holen, of the Norwegian Defence University College**, focused on elements of

their NAP that are specific to the military. **Elisabet Hedin, from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)**, located the Swedish NAP within Sweden's feminist foreign policy.

Alessandra Nervi of the Norwegian Red Cross and Ella Van den Heuvel, a Gender Expert and Member of the Civilian Expert Pool of the Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands also provided valuable insights during the Roundtable discussion.



The Discussion

The discussion was wide-ranging and participants appreciated the overviews provided by all the experts.

Each speaker identified particular strengths in their approach to WPS and National Action Plans. They also outlined challenges and lessons they have learned.

The Netherlands is now on its third NAP. Anne Kwakkenbos highlighted the financial commitment (€60 million) that is included in their current NAP. She noted that the collaborative process between civil society

and the government has been positive, although it has taken time.

Norway is also on its third NAP. Sine Vorland Holen outlined the balance between legitimacy and functionality that their NAP provides. She stressed that clarity of roles and concepts for practitioners was crucial and that this should be reflected in training objectives.

Elisabet Hedin situated the Swedish National Action Plan within their feminist foreign policy. This overt policy orientation provides a strong backing for the NAP as well as clear political will and commitment. Women's rights are clear priorities of Sweden's overall foreign policy. She noted that a key technical lesson from earlier NAPs was to reduce the number of sub-objectives.

Following the presentations, participants and panellists discussed and debated a range of issues, challenges and lessons.



Government and civil society consultation & cooperation are key and there are diverse approaches: The three countries all have their own particular approach to consultation and cooperation between government and civil society. The Netherlands has an unprecedented structure: a partnership between civil society and government. There are 70 signatories to their NAP, including diaspora and newcomer groups. They acknowledge that

such an inclusive process takes longer and does require resources. Sweden's process included a reference group of government and civil society participants.

Participants noted the importance of inclusive and genuine consultation and reaching out to newcomers from conflict areas.

Resources – financial and human – are critical for success: Financing is important. Reaching out to include the expertise of diverse national groups (such as refugee women) takes time and money. It is important to have both dedicated funds for WPS initiatives (including funding for women's rights organizations, networks and movements) and to strategically incorporate these issues into overarching initiatives. It is important not to keep WPS activities and priorities in a silo.

Support for women's organizations is key: Participants noted the importance of women's organizations as peacebuilders and their current and constant underfunding by the international community. The question is not just more money for WPS, but how this money is spent and what mechanisms can be put in place to ensure that resources reach grassroots women's organizations.

Appropriate indicators are challenging: Although it is understood that monitoring and evaluation are very important, results-based indicators present difficulties. It can be a challenge to identify appropriate outcomes that can be monitored by relevant indicators. How, for example, do we measure the impact of a training programme?

As well, there is the danger of reducing complex outcomes to specific numbers. It is critical to avoid simply counting 'widgets'. Qualitative indicators are crucial to understand the impact of NAPs.

How to use (or not use) the four WPS ‘pillars’ (participation, protection, prevention and relief & recovery):

Different countries take different approaches to using the four pillars within their National Action Plans. Norway situates their NAP in a human rights context and considers Norwegian foreign policy priorities. Sweden does use the pillars, but sees them as mutually reinforcing.

Training and capacity building are important but impacts can be difficult to measure: Participants noted the difficulty in assessing whether or not staff develop new skills and adopt new behaviours as a result of WPS training. There can also be different definitions of what it means to include WPS in a general training program (but there was consensus that it is more than one slide).

Identification of focus countries can be a useful way to concentrate efforts: All three countries had specific focus countries. The Netherlands has made funds available for programming in focus countries, however, only signatories to the NAP can apply. Sweden has identified 12 countries to focus their attention to WPS programming.

The context has changed since UNSCR 1325 was adopted, therefore there are new issues that need to be incorporated into WPS strategies: Since 2000 and the adoption of the first WPS Security Council Resolution (UNSCR 1325), the global panorama has changed. New issues have emerged. There are opportunities to address themes such as militarized and toxic masculinities, violent extremism, links with climate change and the conflict/resource extraction overlap. Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers has also assumed a more prominent place.

Recent attention to Combatting Violent Extremism (CVE) is a double-edged sword: On one hand, it is important that CVE strategies take women’s perspectives

into account and use a gender analysis. On the other hand there are many reports of women’s groups being used in an instrumentalist way. If not planned carefully, these initiatives risk endangering women. As well, there is a concern that funds that might have gone to WPS objectives are being channeled into CVE initiatives.

A clear theory of change can be useful: Both the Netherlands and Norway articulate a ‘Theory of Change’ in their NAPs. They have found this to be a useful approach.

Is it useful to have a domestic element in the NAP? There was some discussion on how domestic issues belonged in NAPs in countries like the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Canada. While there was consensus that issues related to women’s participation in the military and in political decision-making were relevant, participants noted that the inclusion of other issues merited further discussion.



Conclusion

The afternoon provided a rich exchange of experiences among the four countries. As many noted, the timing was appropriate as Canada is currently in discussions regarding the updating of its National Action Plan.

Participants expressed the hope that the discussions would continue as there are still

many questions and much to be learned from each other.

The afternoon ended with a reminder that when discussing NAPs, it was important to keep the long-term objectives in mind. Change on the ground, greater security and peace are all very much needed in many places around the world.



References

Links to the following documents are available at <https://wpsn-canada.org/1325-resources/>

National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security from The Netherlands, Sweden, and Norway

Canada's National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (C-NAP)

- Monitoring reports: 2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014
- Independent mid-term review of the C-NAP (by Inclusive Security)

WPSN-C reflections and analysis of the C-NAP:

- Looking Back, Looking Forward (December 2015)
- Worth the Wait? (May 2014)

Brief presented to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development for their study on Women, Peace and Security; Prepared by the WPSN-C (April 28, 2016)



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