

Looking Back,
Looking Forward:



women | peace | security

Consultations on Canada's
National Action Plan

Background Note #1

FOUR PILLARS OF THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

The Women, Peace and Security agenda provides a holistic approach to security and peace and comprised of four main pillars: Participation, Conflict Prevention, Protection, and Relief and Recovery. Addressing all four pillars is critical to tackling the root causes of conflict and creating sustainable peace.

National Action Plans on 1325 should reflect the holistic intention of the WPS agenda by addressing the four pillars. Many countries chose to organize their NAPs around the four pillars, as Canada did during the first C-NAP. But as the pillars are mutually reinforcing and overlapping, organizing the NAP around the pillars is not necessarily the most effective. For example, in Canada's first C-NAP, reporting was often confusing and repetitive as activities fit within several pillars. It is important to look for a different organizing principle for the new C-NAP.

Participation

Full and equal participation and representation of women at all levels of decision-making, including peace processes, electoral processes, UN positions, and the broader social political sphere

While it is well documented that women's participation results in better outcomes when it comes to peace processes and peacebuilding efforts, women's participation continues to be contested and generally only achieved through concerted pressure and lobbying by women's organizations. Women have the skills and

capacity to participate but face political, social, and logistical barriers that make it impossible. Political will and skill is key to integrating and amplifying women's voices and participation.

The barriers to women's participation must be addressed with context-appropriate strategies, which require a deep understanding of the barriers as well as possible solutions. Countries like Canada can support and fund women's organizations as they are best suited to provide the analysis and solutions that will enable them to push for their right to participate and make their voices heard. While this area of the agenda has seen some concrete lessons learned and a few successes, more dedicated and coordinated actions are needed.

Conflict Prevention

Incorporation of a gender perspective and the participation of women in preventing the emergence, spread, and re-emergence of violent conflict as well as addressing root causes including the need for disarmament.

The prevention of armed conflict and the reduction of ever escalating levels of militarization is the underlying objective of the women, peace and security agenda. Over the past decades, military responses to conflict have dominated international interventions. Little progress has been made to put in place effective early warning and prevention measures, including addressing the root causes of conflict. An attitudinal shift away from military

responses towards peaceful conflict prevention strategies is needed.

Prevention strategies include early warning and response, preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and the use of information and communication technology. These strategies must integrate gender analysis. Women-led or informed strategies to early warning and conflict resolution are proven tools to strengthen effectiveness of conflict prevention measures, but have rarely been incorporated. For example, evidence shows that rising levels of gendered violence is a predictor of insecurity in a society. Also, states that have higher levels of gender equality are less likely to use force and instead prioritize non-military options.

Protection

Specific protection rights and needs of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings, including reporting and prosecution of sexual and gender-based violence

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda recognizes that the impacts of war on women and girls are compounded by pre-existing gender inequalities and discrimination. All forms of violence against women increase during war and leave women with a lack of access to the most fundamental rights, including health care, food, shelter, education or even nationality. These rights are closely linked to women's security and must be addressed in interventions holistically by recognizing the need for support for victims/survivors, security sector reform, ending impunity, and building the capacity of women's groups.

It is important that humanitarian work includes gender analysis to ensure women's needs, rights and security are fully addressed. Women's leadership and gender equality is of highest importance in making humanitarian action effective and successful. Therefore, any programming in humanitarian settings must have women's leadership and the promotion of gender equality at its core

Relief and recovery

Promoting and working to ensure women's equal access to humanitarian and development assistance, promoting aid services that support specific needs and capacities of women and girls in all relief and recovery efforts.

Despite the leadership roles women often play during conflict, they find themselves largely locked out of decision-making forums post-conflict. Women's needs are often swept aside and their concerns are not factored into the state-building enterprise. For example, a key issue in post-conflict settings is that sexual violence is seldom addressed as a security concern and continues unabated post-conflict. As a result women's security continues to be undermined and peace remains elusive.

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda reimagines peacebuilding in way that leverages the capacity and contributions of women, and develops strategies for the inclusion of their roles and experiences. It is the women on the ground who are instrumental in stitching the fabric of society back together. Inclusive and transformative peacebuilding is not only a series of activities, or checked boxes for women's participation. It is an approach which requires addressing systemic gender inequality, which is among the root causes of conflict. Peacebuilding and reconstruction must empower women and girls economically, politically and socially and include long-term strategies that benefit women from the grassroots, building their capacity for individual and collective action to ensure their participation in elections, constitution writing, and economic recovery.

Conclusion

The Global Study on the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 provides further details of the gaps and successes under each pillar as well as a roadmap on moving ahead. What is clear is that implementation requires both a mainstreaming approach as well as specific targeted actions. It requires that a gender lens be applied across all programming and diplomacy in fragile and conflict affected states. National Action Plans provide a pertinent opportunity to assess how this can be done successfully.