

UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security: Consultation Response

The LSE Centre for Women, Peace and Security welcomes this opportunity for academics to provide feedback on the UK government's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2014-17 (NAP) and make recommendations for the next iteration of the plan.

A call for responses was made in February 2017 and this paper summarises the key points and recommendations made in the 16 submissions received, all of which the Centre for Women, Peace and Security endorses. The Centre also proposes four key recommendations:

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In response to shifts in the global political landscape, the next NAP must commit the UK to protecting advances made in women, peace and security policy and its implementation and demonstrate continuing global leadership in this area by counteracting attempts to undermine the agenda.
2. In addition to its focus on the UK's external engagement, the next NAP should include a greater focus on the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda at home, including in its application to Northern Ireland, implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty, the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, and in upholding the rights of refugees and asylum seekers coming to the UK.
3. The UK government should apply a human rights-based approach to the implementation of women, peace and security commitments, including economic and social rights, and make this explicit in the new NAP. It should resist any moves to subordinate the human rights lens to security objectives.
4. The new NAP should provide greater transparency around what funding the UK government will commit to its implementation.

A. The current NAP

In their submissions, members of the Centre for Women, Peace and Security and academic colleagues made a number of commendations of the current UK NAP 2014-7. It was thought to be well-written and covers a good deal of ground. Its joint ownership across the Ministry of Defence (MOD), Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Department for International Development

(DFID) is important for promoting cross-departmental working, and the allocation of activities to named teams and departments is important for ensuring a clear division of responsibilities and accountability for implementation. The Strategic Framework in particular presents a strong vision and theory of change, grounding the NAP in the principles of human rights, substantive equality and human security. The UK's commitment to supporting women's and men's access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services in situations of conflict, including safe abortion, was especially welcomed.

However, a number of areas where the current NAP could be improved were also noted. In particular, the absence of any commitments on women, peace and security (WPS) in Northern Ireland undermines the UK's ability to champion women's rights in post-conflict contexts elsewhere, and there is a gap in relation to how HMG is implementing WPS commitments domestically, such as in asylum and immigration policy, participation of women in decision-making and in its arms transfer licensing system. Some elements which feature in the narrative parts of the NAP are not well reflected at the level of activities, such as an understanding of the relationships between gender, race, class, (dis)ability and other aspects of identity; addressing the role of men and boys; and commitment to conflict prevention as a core part of the WPS agenda. The lack of a dedicated budget for WPS activities or transparency around spending on the activities outlined in the NAP is also a concern. Inevitably, these concerns are further elaborated through the rest of this paper in the form of recommendations for the next NAP.

B. What should the next NAP cover? Why?

1. PREVENTION

In line with UN definitions, the Centre understands the prevention pillar of the WPS agenda to refer to the prevention of violent conflict, as well as the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence during and in the aftermath of conflict. As per the recommendations of the Global Study on the Implementation of Resolution 1325, 2015 (Global Study), this should include not only supporting women's participation in shorter-term conflict prevention mechanisms such as early warning systems, but also addressing underlying drivers of conflict, including structural inequalities. We note that, while the NAP and policies such as the Building Stability Overseas Strategy make commitments to supporting upstream conflict prevention, HMG's engagement in conflict-affected contexts is not always fully consistent with this goal. In particular, the granting of licences for transfers of arms to states which are known to violate international human rights law and international humanitarian law is an on-going concern: the sale of armaments to Saudi Arabia which have been used against civilians in Yemen is one recent example.

In relation to the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence in and after conflicts, HMG's ongoing commitment to providing global leadership in this area through PSVI, situated within the NAP as part of the UK's broader WPS commitments, is welcomed.

However, more could be done to ensure that adequate systems are in place for preventing and responding to the perpetration of gender-based violence by UK military personnel, including intimate partner violence.

It is recommended that the new NAP should:

1. give more substantive meaning to how HMG will support long-term conflict prevention, include more concrete commitments to addressing structural drivers of conflict, with specific references to CEDAW article 5, which requires states parties to take appropriate measures to 'modify social and cultural patterns of conduct, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary ... practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women';
2. go beyond supporting women's participation in arms control initiatives, to include how HMG will fulfil its own obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty, including but not limited to article 7 (4) on the risk of gender-based violence and as noted in Security Council resolution 2106 (2013). It should also reference the obligation under CEDAW General Recommendation No. 30 (2013) to robustly regulate the arms trade and appropriately control the circulation of conventional weapons, including small arms;
3. give effect to the recommendations of the House of Lords Select Committee on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict relating to the continuation of PSVI and in particular that policy goals in this area must be ambitious, transparent and deliverable;
4. continue to support the investigation and prosecution of crimes of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, including through the roll out of the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict: keep the use of the Protocol under review to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation;
5. include measures to address the perpetration of gender-based violence by UK military personnel outside of conflict zones, including intimate partner violence. Post-deployment training should be given to all personnel, including commanding officers and welfare support staff, and should cover risk factors for violence. Systems should be put in place to allow incidents of gender-based violence to be reported independently of the military chain of command, and data on the perpetration of domestic and intimate partner violence by UK military personnel should be collected and published;
6. include measures to prevent gender-based violence before it occurs, including through education on non-stereotyped gender roles, human health and sexuality and the right to personal integrity, 'adapted to the evolving capacity of learners in formal curricula and at all levels of education' (Istanbul Convention, article 14), before and also in the aftermath of conflict.

2. PROTECTION

The links made in the current NAP with UK obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law are welcomed. However, since the two are often referenced together, no clear distinction is drawn between them, with the result that international humanitarian law receives less attention. Nevertheless the importance of accepting the applicability of human rights law in conflict zones and its extra-territorial application is recognised.

It is recommended that the new NAP should:

1. commit to include training on gender and human rights, especially the human rights of women, as part of all basic training and education, not only pre-deployment training, which should focus on context-specific content;
2. recognise the importance of the continued applicability of human rights law, alongside international humanitarian law, in armed conflict, including its extra-territorial application.

3. PARTICIPATION

The participation pillar of the WPS agenda is often narrowly construed as referring only or primarily to formal peace negotiations. While the participation of women from diverse backgrounds and especially from the conflict affected areas in these is of course vital, the WPS resolutions call for women's full and equal participation in all decision-making on matters of peace and security and at all levels, which includes not only track II processes and local peacebuilding initiatives but more day-to-day decision-making processes in all institutions responsible for maintaining and promoting peace and security. Furthermore, women's participation in decision-making is difficult to achieve in practice without ensuring other basic rights are fulfilled, such as access to sustainable employment, adequate and affordable healthcare, housing and nutrition. This strengthens the case set out below under 'Relief and Recovery' for fully integrating the fulfillment of women's economic and social rights into the new NAP. Another important barrier to women's full participation in decision-making is safety, and so protections for women human rights defenders must be an integral part of the participation pillar.

It is recommended that the new NAP should:

1. maintain the commitments in the current NAP to building women and girls' leadership skills at the grassroots level, allowing them to set the terms of their participation;
2. provide more detail on how HMG will support women human rights defenders to carry out their work in safety, such as through the provision of communications technologies or developing networks of support;
3. recognise the ways in which protection, prevention and relief and recovery efforts can support women's participation, including through ensuring the fulfillment of women's economic and social rights;
4. explicitly include measures to increase women's participation in decision-making on matters of peace and security within UK institutions, and more concrete commitments to ensuring the participation of women from conflict-affected contexts in all UK-hosted and supported summits, peace talks and donor conferences.

4. RELIEF AND RECOVERY

The explicit commitment in the current NAP to supporting the right to safe abortion services, which is particularly important in light of the reintroduction of the global gag rule by the new US administration, is strongly welcomed. It is incumbent upon HMG to set out how it will work with other states in response to this development to ensure that the rights of women in conflict and post-conflict contexts are not undermined. Furthermore, while extensive guidelines for gender-responsive humanitarian provision are available, and it is becoming widely accepted that simple measures such as 'lights, locks and latrines' can help improve women's safety in emergency contexts, the Global Study found that even these basic principles are often not implemented. As such, setting out concrete measures for ensuring that these are always included in humanitarian relief programming is a necessary step to making it the norm, and not only an aspiration.

HMG is urged to expand on the current NAP by including a greater focus on long-term post-conflict recovery, as well as immediate relief. Horizontal inequalities in economic and social rights are often among the causes of conflict, and this is also vital for gender-sensitive conflict prevention, as well as social and transformative justice. As noted earlier, securing women's economic and social rights is crucial to enable them to participate in decision-making. However, the economic liberalisation measures frequently pursued by the international community in post-conflict contexts often shrink the public sector, taking away women's jobs and the social services they rely on, and increasing their burden of unpaid labour. Women are often forced into exploitative forms of work. Furthermore, such policies, which often rely heavily on extractive industries, agribusiness and infrastructure projects, tend to disproportionately benefit those (mostly men) who have won and maintain power through violent conflict and crime. Instead, post-conflict states should be supported to build their tax base and pursue sustainable economic development strategies that serve all social groups within communities. Ensuring women's participation not only in peace processes but in decision-making about the economy and access to resources in post-conflict contexts is important to ensuring gender-responsive budgets and investment strategies.

It is recommended that the new NAP should:

1. explicitly reference the right to non-discriminatory medical care under enshrined in international humanitarian law, and to DFID's policy on this, making clear that it applies in all post-conflict recovery and not only emergency settings;
2. set out how HMG will ensure that basic existing guidelines for gender-sensitive responses in emergency situations are followed, such as the provision of locks, lights, latrines, mental health services, and menstrual hygiene, all of which are often missed. This should include providing adequate support for women's leadership in camps for refugees and displaced persons, and getting women registered as recipients of food aid;
3. address not only emergency humanitarian relief under this pillar, but also short and long term equal access to social and economic rights, referencing CEDAW, including article 4 relating to the adoption of temporary special measures;

4. commit to a human rights-based approach to macroeconomics, supporting sustainable economic development strategies in post-conflict states. It should set out how HMG will support the participation of women from diverse backgrounds in developing and ensuring the implementation of these strategies, including through Gender Budget Initiatives.

5. DOMESTICATING THE NAP

The current NAP is largely externally facing, and one of the major concerns raised in submissions to this consultation was ensuring that HMG is also applying the principles of WPS agenda internally within the UK. The NAPs of Ireland, France, Italy provide some examples of donor country NAPs which integrate a strong internal focus, which the new UK NAP could benefit significantly from. Of particular concern is the absence of Northern Ireland from the NAP, which will only become more significant as Brexit goes ahead. This omission has been raised by the CEDAW Committee and the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences, and it will be difficult for the UK to be recognised as a world leader on WPS issues if it is not applying them at home.

Another issue which raises concerns is the lack of support provided for survivors of wartime violence seeking asylum in the UK. Reports of women survivors of sexual violence being further abused by security guards inside Yarl's Wood Immigration Detention Centre, and the deportation of LGBTI individuals to countries where their lives are at risk are at odds with the UK's WPS and PSVI commitments. Furthermore, the 'no recourse to public funds' rule and fear of deportation can leave refugees and asylum seekers trapped in abusive relationships once they reach the UK. Again, the Irish NAP provides an example of how these issues can be included.

It is recommended that the new NAP should:

1. include an in-country plan for the UK, demonstrating HMG's commitment to implementing the WPS agenda at home as well as abroad;
2. contain a section on Northern Ireland, as the Irish NAP does. This should task the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Secretary of State with implementation of WPS commitments there, including with reference to dealing with the past, ongoing paramilitarism and women's participation in decision-making;
3. include a commitment to abolish the 'no recourse to public funds' rule, which prevents women with insecure immigration and status from accessing services such as domestic violence refuges and housing;
4. commit to investing in alternatives to immigration detention that allow asylum seekers and migrants to reside in the community, commission an independent investigation into allegations of sexual abuse committed by staff at Yarl's Wood, and end the deportation of vulnerable individuals before their options for legal appeals have been exhausted;
5. include commitments to train border and immigration staff on gender issues and to develop and implement gender-responsive standard operating procedures, such as in the French and Italian NAPs;

6. put in place a commitment to the ratification of the Istanbul Convention (the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence), noting its applicability in ‘times of peace and situations of armed conflict’; incorporate CEDAW throughout the NAP and into UK law;
7. commit to reporting on WPS implementation, both domestically and externally, as part of the UK’s periodic reports to CEDAW and in the Universal Periodic Review process.

6. COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

While UNSCR 2242 (2015) calls for the greater integration of the WPS, counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism (CVE) agendas, the concerns expressed in the Global Study about the potential for women, and the WPS agenda, to be instrumentalised by efforts to counter violent extremism in ways that undermine women’s rights and the transformative potential of WPS are shared. While it is vital that CVE programmes apply a gender perspective and that women in communities affected by violent extremism take leadership roles in opposing it, the WPS agenda is a human rights agenda and should be implemented as such. The WPS agenda should not be used as a vehicle for promoting CVE objectives; rather, the principles of WPS should be applied as a check on CVE efforts, to ensure that they are gender-sensitive and compliant with human rights standards. These recommendations apply equally to the UK’s efforts to address violent extremism domestically as they do to HMG’s work overseas.

It is recommended that the new NAP should:

1. reiterate that WPS is a human rights agenda, and set out how HMG will ensure that all UK efforts to promote peace and security, including CVE, are gender-sensitive and are based on and incorporate human rights principles;
2. set out how it will ensure that women and women’s rights organisations are given a meaningful role in designing all efforts to counter violent extremism, and are not seen only as implementers of programmes designed without their input or as objects or targets for these programmes;
3. refer to existing research on the negative consequences of past and current CVE and counter-terrorism efforts on women and women’s rights organisations, and set out how HMG will work to reverse these trends.

7. UNDERSTANDINGS OF GENDER

The new NAP could benefit from stronger and more consistent recognition throughout the document that women’s needs and experiences differ according to, *inter alia*, their race, class, caste, ethnicity, religion, (dis)ability and sexual orientation. When promoting women’s participation, or the protection of their human rights, these differences matter, and must be taken into account. Furthermore, while it is right that the NAP should prioritise women’s rights, it should clarify that ‘gender’ is not synonymous with ‘women’ and include more detailed thinking about how men, and

sexual and gender minorities, fit into a gender analysis. While the current NAP's commitment to working with men and boys as partners for change is welcomed, it is also important to understand the different roles that varying constructions of masculinity can play in the build up to conflict, during conflict and in peacebuilding, and to include this in HMG's analysis of conflict contexts. Furthermore, though the mention of sexuality in the current NAP is welcome, consideration of sexual and gender minorities is otherwise absent.

It is recommended that the new NAP should:

1. include a short section defining what is meant by 'gender', in accordance with the CEDAW definition in its General Recommendation No 28 (2010) and the Istanbul Convention; that it makes clear that it is not limited to two static categories of 'male' and 'female', and that the experiences of people of all genders and the consequences of violence differ according to their race, class, caste, ethnicity, religion, (dis)ability and sexual orientation, among other things;
2. reiterate throughout the document the importance of recognising and accounting for women's diversity, including when making decisions about how their needs will be met and how their participation in decision-making will be supported;
3. maintain its focus on women's rights, whilst also recognising more strongly the importance of analysing the diverse roles and experiences of men from a gender perspective, and the influence of masculinities in driving conflict and influencing peacebuilding;
4. acknowledge the particular needs of sexual and gender minorities, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people and those who do not identify within the male/female binary.

8. THE UK'S ROLE ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

The UK holds the pen on WPS issues at the UN Security Council, and has shown leadership through PSVI, positioning itself as a global leader on these issues. The new US administration has indicated its intention to withdraw substantial amounts of funding from the UN, and has shown hostility towards the international women's rights agenda in its first few months. This makes it all the more important that the UK uses its position to defend existing international commitments on WPS, and to ensure that funding for WPS work increases in line with the aspirations of the Global Study. Furthermore, given the importance of the EU as a key actor in a range of conflict-affected contexts, it is vital that the UK continues to engage with it on WPS issues following Brexit. The new NAP provides an opportunity to make more transparent the UK's ongoing commitment to support NATO's work on WPS and how it intends to take this forward.

It is recommended that the new NAP should:

1. make a commitment to protect the advances already made on WPS and related women's rights issues at the UN and to seek further progress;
2. set out how HMG intends to work with the EU on WPS issues after Brexit;

3. commit to continuing support for NATO's work on WPS, including how HMG will engage with the biennial revision of the NATO Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 in 2018, and how it will support the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives and the office of the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative on Women, Peace and Security.

9. BUDGET AND FUNDING

The fact that HMG aspires to integrate gender into all of its work on peace and security and does not seek to silo WPS work is welcomed. However, allocating dedicated resources for targeted WPS work – or providing transparency around funding for specific WPS work being undertaken – would not preclude the possibility of mainstreaming gender into other work. Indeed, mainstreaming often requires a dedicated budget, for example when it requires the provision of training or technical advice. The Global Study notes that a lack of funding has been one of the principal barriers to the implementation of the WPS agenda. While reporting on budgets allocated for every relevant activity would create an unnecessary administrative burden, the absence of budget information in the current NAP creates a lack of accountability around spending, and makes it difficult for the UK to encourage others to invest in WPS work. Furthermore, the nature of funding provided for implementing partners has important implications for the effectiveness of WPS work: the growing trend towards short-term, project-based funding makes it difficult for women activists to build sustainable movements for change, and the complexity of application and reporting systems can make funding inaccessible for grassroots organisations, who are often the most effective in bringing about social change.

It is recommended that the new NAP should:

1. include budget allocations for, at a minimum, major projects and activities;
2. commit to providing long-term, core funding to women's rights organisations in addition to project-based funding streams;
3. put in place steps to make UK funding streams more accessible to community-based organisations in conflict-affected contexts.

C. How should the NAP be structured?

Merging the NAP and the implementation plan into a single document would help to reduce repetition and avoid a situation where those tasked with implementing parts of it have uneven knowledge of the two documents. The inclusion of country plans is helpful, although it should be noted that the WPS is relevant to all contexts, and UNSCR 2242 (2015) clarifies that the UNSC will integrate WPS concerns into its work on all countries on its agenda. As such, it is considered that country plans should not be framed in terms of 'priority' countries, but rather their inclusion in the NAP should be viewed as a means of showcasing what HMG is doing in a range of contexts, both in order to lead by example and to improve accountability. As outlined above, including a country plan for the UK would also enable HMG to show that it is committed to implementing the WPS agenda domestically as well as abroad.

It is recommended that the new NAP should:

1. include the implementation plan as part of a single document;
2. make clear that HMG is committed to implementing WPS commitments in all conflict situations, not only those which have country plans in the NAP, and revise the language of 'priority countries';
3. include a country plan on the UK which outlines how HMG will implement WPS concerns domestically.

D. How should it reflect the voices of those affected by its implementation?

HMG's decision to run a consultation process in the redevelopment of the NAP is to be welcomed. However, this consultation remains a relatively closed process, in which HMG itself defines who is a relevant stakeholder. In future, a more open and public consultation process would enable a broader range of actors to participate, based on their self-definition as stakeholders. This is particularly important in conflict-affected contexts, where hearing and listening to the voices of those who will be most affected by the NAP is key. The Government's decision to fund consultation events in a selection of countries is welcomed and it is recommended that it be replicated in the next NAP development process. Furthermore, there is a need for ongoing communication with stakeholders in-country working on WPS issues throughout the period of the NAP, for which the NAP itself could set out a framework. It is also important to ensure that the activities set out in the country plans are based upon a mapping the work that activists and women's rights organisations are already doing in each country, to ensure that HMG's work complements, and does not undermine or compete with, existing initiatives.

It is recommended that HMG:

1. run a more public and inclusive consultation process for the next NAP redevelopment, allowing stakeholders to be more self-selecting;
2. continue to fund consultation events in conflict-affected countries in future NAP redevelopments, as it has committed to do for this one;
3. make concrete commitments in the new NAP to ongoing communication and consultation with stakeholders in conflict contexts, including women activists and women's rights organisations;
4. base country plans on an analysis of existing work being done on women, peace and security, peacebuilding and women's rights, in order to ensure complementary.

E. How should it set its objectives and track results?

The 'Strategic Framework' included in the current NAP represents an important improvement upon previous UK NAPs, in that it sets out clearly how HMG understands the WPS agenda and how it envisages change happening. As such, it is recommended that a similar section be included in the next NAP, in the main document rather than in an annex. This will help to ensure that it operates as a strategy and not only an activity plan. Similarly, beginning each country plan with a short theory of change would help to explain why the chosen objectives have been prioritised. These theories of change should then be reflected in the tracking of results, which should emphasise outcomes and impacts achieved by HMG's work, rather than focusing largely on activities and outputs as the current NAP does. For example, where training activities have taken place, the tracking of results should record not only how many people have been trained, but also the quality of the training in terms of achieving learning outcomes. In order to track this effectively, baseline data – quantitative and qualitative – will be needed to record progress against each objective. As noted above, the assignment of tasks to specific individuals is also welcomed and should be retained in the new NAP.

It is recommended that the new NAP should:

1. be based upon a strong theory of change, included at the start of the document;
 2. measure results at the level of outcomes and impact, using annual reports to highlight what has worked well and what has worked less well;
 3. include robust baseline data against which its achievements can be measured;
 4. make clear which objectives are the responsibility of which teams or individuals, as well as who is responsible for overall oversight of NAP implementation.
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RESPONDENTS

In response to the consultation announcement of February 2017, the Centre for Women, Peace and Security received written submissions from the following individuals:

Christine Chinkin	LSE
Claire Duncanson	University of Edinburgh
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Zeynep Kaya	LSE
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Kate Millar, Aiko Holvikivi	LSE
Fionnuala D. Ní Aoláin	University of Minnesota / Ulster University
Catherine O'Rourke	Ulster University Jordanstown
Margaret Alexander Rehoboth	[independent of affiliation]
Inger Skjelsbæk, Torunn Lise Tryggestad	University of Oslo / Peace Research Institute Oslo
Claire Pierson, Jennifer Thomson	De Montfort University
Jacqui True	Monash University
Katharine Wright	University of Winchester