

IN BRIEF



ADVANCING THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA IN THE ASIA AND THE PACIFIC REGION (2022-2027)

Photo: UN Women/Gagan Thapa Magar

I. Background

Over the past 20 years, countries in the Asia and the Pacific region have made substantial progress in furthering the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda. Eleven countries have developed WPS national action plans,¹ and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is currently developing a regional plan of action.² Further, women negotiators and signatories took part in peace processes in Afghanistan (2001, 2019), Myanmar (2017, 2018), Papua New Guinea (2001) and the Philippines (2011).³

However, critical gaps remain between the ambitions expressed by international commitments and the actual political will and financial support given to WPS efforts. This is partly because women continue to be excluded and under-represented in all aspects of decision-making in the region.⁴ Moreover, the nature of conflict and its drivers have shifted; the gender dimensions of non-traditional security risks, including climate change, cybersecurity and violent extremism, pose new challenges that require innovative responses and solutions.

The Asia and the Pacific region has experienced the full spectrum of conflict contexts, ranging from countries that present severe security challenges to women and women's human rights defenders, to contexts where challenges are less visible but conflict risks are equally present.

The region's natural resources are among the richest and most diverse in the world⁵ but are vulnerable to environmental degradation and climate change impacts, pressures that are expected to exacerbate tensions and conflict.

The Asia and the Pacific region has a history of security challenges related to violent extremism. The considerable expansion of digital space during the COVID-19 pandemic (and parallel shrinkage of civic space) dramatically increased security challenges related to cybersecurity, greatly intensifying the range and frequency of harms and crimes that affect women.

To effectively meet these challenges in the years ahead—and to avoid a backslide in women's rights and the progress that has been achieved on the WPS agenda—continued efforts and stronger partnerships are needed to ensure that women's voices (including young women's voices) are heard and respected and that their leadership is strengthened across all sectors.

¹ <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/peace-and-security/national-action-plans>

² <https://asean.org/asean-develops-regional-plan-of-action-to-advance-women-peace-and-security-agenda/>

³ <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/in-focus/csw/snapshot-of-womens-leadership-in-asia-and-the-pacific>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ See for example: <https://www.adb.org/features/natural-resources-conservation-asia-adbs-take>



II. Our Vision and Approach

The UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) envisages that women will meaningfully participate in and lead traditional and non-traditional peace and security processes, thus contributing to achieving sustainable peace and resilience throughout the region. An important cornerstone in this work is leveraging the WPS agenda to redress existing and historical inequalities, including those based on race; sexual orientation; religion; national, ethnic or social origin; displacement; marital, birth, disability or other status.

To realize this vision, UN Women provides support to collaborations and partnerships among regional and national state actors and women's organizations and movements that work to advance WPS commitments. Recognizing the specific expertise and needs of young women peacebuilders, UN Women provides tailored support that enhances their opportunities to act as changemakers and leaders on traditional and emerging WPS issues.

With a United Nations Security Council mandate, a long history of advancing the WPS agenda and extensive experience supporting UN Member States and civil society, UN Women is well-placed as a key strategic partner that provides technical support, capacity building, research and data and platforms to convene stakeholders around WPS issues.

Drawing on two decades of lessons learned and coalition building, UN Women is committed to continuing to build the WPS evidence base, particularly on emerging issues, and to leverage good practices to deliver change. Working as part of an integrated team of governance and peace and security experts, UN Women in the Asia and the Pacific region will ensure strong linkages and integration among WPS goals, complementing efforts to promote inclusive governance, the rule of law and women's access to justice.

Results Framework



III. Building on Knowledge, Expertise and Evidence-based Programming

NATIONAL ACTION PLANS ON WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY (NAPS WPS)⁶

Over the past five years, UN Women has provided technical and financial support to governments, women-led organizations and CSOs at the national and local levels in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste. This targeted support helped develop, implement and monitor NAPs WPS through inclusive processes that reflected women's diverse experiences, priorities and voices.

PROMOTING WOMEN IN LAW ENFORCEMENT AND PREVENTING TRAFFICKING IN BORDER LOCATIONS⁷

Between 2018 and 2021, UN Women, in partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, strengthened the capacities of communities and front-line officers to provide gender-sensitive services, ensuring that the needs of women in the context of cross-border crime are met. This resulted in 24,000 women gaining awareness of their rights and available services related to safe migration and 372 women at risk of trafficking receiving direct support. In addition, 478 front-line officers strengthened their capacities on gender-sensitive case management. In partnership with INTERPOL, a study on Women in Law Enforcement in the ASEAN Region (2020) was published⁸. Also in 2021, ASEAN adopted a border management cooperation roadmap that encourages ASEAN Member States to increase the number of women officers in cross-border operations.

PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM⁹

Since 2017, the Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities programme has radically transformed the understanding of how important women's leadership is to preventing violent extremism. The programme has contributed to more cohesive and peaceful societies in the region amid ongoing violent extremist threats. Among other achievements, the programme's community-based theatre shows and digital platforms raised the awareness of over five million people on the role women play in preventing terrorism, violent extremism and hate speech. Furthermore, ground-breaking

UN Women research deepened the data-driven evidence base on the drivers of extremist violence, its impact on women and girls and advanced the conversation on gender in violent extremism.



Photo: Shebana Alqaseer

“With the upsurge of disinformation, gender-based violence, sexism, and misogyny in the digital world, it is important to equip young women cyberdefenders and advocates with tools and knowledge to reclaim our space online and offline.”

Shebana Alqaseer, Gender Specialist,
University of the Philippines Centre for Women's and Gender Studies

WOMEN, PEACE AND CYBERSECURITY¹⁰

The Women, Peace and Cybersecurity: Promoting Women's Peace and Security in the Digital World programme is playing a key role in knowledge- and evidence-generation on cybersecurity considerations that are relevant to the realization of the WPS agenda in ASEAN countries. In addition to contributing to novel research on the topic, UN Women is supporting young cyberdefenders, digital rights advocates, women's civil society organizations, and women's human rights defenders in the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. Support includes enhancing digital literacy to use digital platforms and available online tools for civic engagement and peacebuilding activities.

During its first year of implementation, the programme reached almost five million people with messaging on the nature of gender-specific online harms and threats and how these may be prevented and addressed.

WPS, CLIMATE, NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Climate change and environmental challenges pose serious risks to peace and security in the region and to peoples' lives — but not equally. UN Women has been developing

6 <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/peace-and-security/national-action-plans>

7 Promoting women in law enforcement: <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/peace-and-security/promoting-women-in-law-enforcement>; preventing trafficking in border locations: <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/peace-and-security/preventing-human-trafficking>

8 <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/o8/women-in-law-enforcement-in-the-asean-region>

9 <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/peace-and-security/preventing-violent-extremism>

10 <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/cybersecurity>

the evidence base to support peace actors in the region to better understand the importance of inclusive natural resource management for sustaining peace and reducing security risks. Additionally, UN Women completed a regional scoping to better understand the nexus between disaster preparedness, conflict and gender. Expansion of the evidence base around these intersecting and non-traditional security issues will continue to be a priority.

IV. UN Women’s Priorities for 2022-2027

The persistent obstacles to the WPS agenda and emerging challenges have delineated priority areas of action to advance the WPS Agenda in the Asia and the Pacific region in the coming years, including:

NAP WPS development and implementation: Continue to support the development, implementation and monitoring of NAP WPS in Asia-Pacific countries and subregions. Support entails engaging in discussions regarding the adoption of the first NAP WPS in some countries, a second NAP WPS in others, and a regional WPS plan of action with ASEAN. UN Women will support other countries where needs arise, working to encourage inclusive approaches and whole-of-society processes that engage women leaders and women’s organizations in the advancement of NAP WPS and other tools to advance the WPS agenda.

Conflict Prevention: Support women’s efforts to tackle the root causes of conflict and historical inequalities by building on gender-sensitive conflict analysis of traditional and non-traditional security issues (including natural resource management and violent extremism threats) and by ensuring that the design of early warning mechanisms and responses take women’s specific concerns into account. UN Women will support women’s groups’ and women-led community platforms’ participation and leadership in gender-responsive community-oriented policing. UN Women will work to increase the representation of women in mediation.

Emerging non-traditional security issues: UN Women will support climate insecurity and cybersecurity policy development, research, data generation and tools with a WPS lens and the inclusion of women and women’s organizations.

Building peace and resilience: To advance the WPS Agenda, UN Women will work to strengthen women’s representation and leadership in law enforcement and the military and will build the skills and knowledge of women peace-builders, peace negotiators and human rights defenders. This will be informed by thorough gender-responsive analysis, thus ensuring that women in all age groups and those who face greater barriers and resistance can access platforms and lead peace efforts.

Programmatic Areas and Overarching Strategies

