

EMPOWERING WOMEN FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE

PREVENTING VIOLENCE AND PROMOTING SOCIAL COHESION IN ASEAN

What is the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda?

The WPS agenda recognizes the differential impact and consequences of peace and security challenges confronting women and girls, as well as the potential role that they can play in achieving and sustaining peace and stability at all levels – local, regional, national and international. Despite the compelling evidence suggesting women’s participation and leadership is indispensable to long-lasting peace and stability, women remain largely excluded or marginalized in the formal peace processes, in transitional justice, in conflict-prevention and conflict resolution and in recovery efforts.

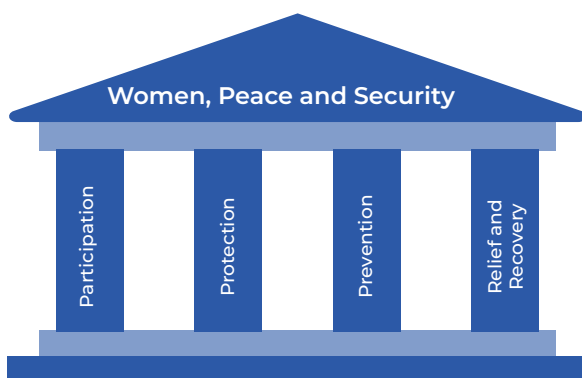
In 2000, the [UN Security Council Resolution 1325](#) (UNSCR 1325) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) was adopted. This landmark resolution called on countries to address the inordinate impact of conflict on women and girls around the globe and to systematically include women in peacebuilding efforts, including peace talks, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction. UNSCR 1325 (2000) affirms the importance of women’s equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security. The WPS agenda rests on four pillars:

- 1) Women’s roles in conflict prevention
- 2) Women’s meaningful participation in the peace and security decision-making process.
- 3) Protection from sexual harms and gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict settings
- 4) Gender-responsive relief and recovery.

Since then, the UN Security Council adopted nine subsequent resolutions on WPS to provide more detailed guidance to address issues such as sexual and gender-based violence, human trafficking and the gendered aspects of peacekeeping efforts. According to [Article 25 of the UN Charter](#), all Member States of the UN “agree to carry out and accept the decisions of the Security Council in accordance with the present Charter”. Therefore, the implementation of the UNSCRs on WPS is manifestly binding.

Today, after more than 20 years since the adoption of UNSCR 1325 (2000), the meaning of the term “security” has expanded: it does not only allude to containing physical violence, but it also has political, economic and social dimensions. Active agency and the well-being of individuals and their communities are also an essential aspect of security. Women’s roles as protagonists and stakeholders of security are highlighted in the WPS agenda, whereas earlier definitions of “security” did not perceive them as a major player.

One common misconception of the WPS agenda is that this global normative framework applies exclusively to conflict-affected regions or countries. In fact, the WPS agenda is highly relevant to so-called “stable” regions and countries with context-specific approaches due to the interlinkages between emerging and new security threats. In today’s world, one that perforce grapples with complex security issues compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, the WPS framework is urgently needed to support a gender-responsive recovery in order to tackle the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on women and girls and the heightened security risks they are confronted with.



1. 1820 (2008), 1888 (2008), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2241 (2015), 2467 (2019), 2493 (2019)

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Photo: UN Women Indonesia

Why is the WPS agenda relevant to ASEAN?

Southeast Asia has enjoyed a relatively long period of regional stability and it plays a crucial role in upholding international peace and security commitments. In recent years, there has been strong momentum to advance the WPS agenda within ASEAN to ensure that women participate in and lead efforts in peace processes, as engaging women will promote long-lasting peace and security within and beyond the region.

The ASEAN Member States have taken more significant strides in implementing the WPS agenda as shown in the [‘ASEAN Regional Study on Women, Peace and Security’](#). Some of these results include strengthened commitments to the promotion of WPS, adoption of a joint statement on promotion of WPS, the enhanced contribution of troops by ASEAN Member States to UN peacekeeping missions, the increasing role of women in law enforcement institutions and the more sustained efforts around conflict prevention, including building social cohesion and community resilience to better confront emerging security challenges and the development of the first-ever [ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women Peace and Security](#) (ASEAN RPA WPS).

Despite all the achievements, there are still individual and common challenges faced by ASEAN Member States that are linked to peace and security, as highlighted in the ASEAN Regional Study on WPS. These challenges include gender and socioeconomic inequalities, increasing

cybersecurity and online violence against women and girls, cross-border security challenges, including trafficking of women and girls, a rising tide of radicalization and extremism, among others. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these challenges, particularly among women and girls of disadvantaged groups in the region.

The WPS framework offers a meaningful approach to reinforcing cross-border cooperation among ASEAN Member States in response to traditional and non-traditional security issues. The WPS agenda is critical to address pressing and emerging challenges in the ASEAN region, including the intensification of violent extremism and terrorism, climate security risks, the growing number of migrants and displaced people, as well as the aftermaths of COVID-19 pandemic as a conflict multiplier in humanitarian and fragile settings. Eventually, the successful advancement of the WPS agenda will forestall any relapse into conflict in the region thereby avoiding backsliding on hard-earned progress on human rights, development, equality and justice.

“We recognize women are agents of change and catalysts to sustain peace, foster prosperity, and safeguard social cohesion for our ASEAN Community.”

– H.E. Dato Lim Jock Hoi, Former Secretary-General of ASEAN

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What is the Empowering Women for Sustainable Peace Project?

Building on ASEAN Member States' firm commitments to advance the WPS agenda, the regional project, **Empowering Women for Sustainable Peace: Preventing Violence and Promoting Social Cohesion in ASEAN** (2021-2025), was jointly launched with ASEAN and supported by the Governments of Canada, the Republic of Korea and the United Kingdom.

Over the five years, together with the UN and ASEAN dialogue partners, UN Women aims to support ASEAN in leveraging and amplifying its comparative strengths in WPS policy and project interventions at the regional and country levels. The project aims to achieve the ultimate goal, namely 'ASEAN Member States will advance and strengthen the implementation of the WPS agenda, including preventing violence against women and girls and promoting social cohesion in the region'. In that regard, the project will focus more specifically on the following key results:

Development of regional policies and frameworks on WPS:

In close collaboration with the UN and dialogue partners, UN Women provides technical assistance to the ASEAN Secretariat and sectoral bodies to develop and implement regional policies on WPS and other related gender equality frameworks such as ASEAN RPA WPS.

Strengthened capacity of ASEAN to implement WPS agenda:

UN Women provides lead technical support to strengthen the capacity of ASEAN sectoral bodies on WPS, in close collaboration with the UN and dialogue partners. In addition, regional women networks and organizations receive support to enhance the capacity to engage with ASEAN on WPS implementation.

Establishment of a regional WPS knowledge platform:

UN Women supports ASEAN in facilitating and creating a regional platform to convene multiple actors and stakeholders to promote dialogue and exchange. This includes exchanges of lessons learned and good practices on the implementation of the WPS agenda.

Innovative country-level approaches of implementing WPS:

In close collaboration with various partners at the country level, UN Women provides technical assistance to Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam to enhance their capacity to develop, coordinate and implement WPS policies and laws. In addition, UN Women provides technical assistance to increase the capacity of non-state actors and communities to implement the WPS agenda at the local level.



Four Member States and a non-state actor under the immediate outcome 4: Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam

Other Member States benefiting through the project work with the ASEAN: Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar and Singapore

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