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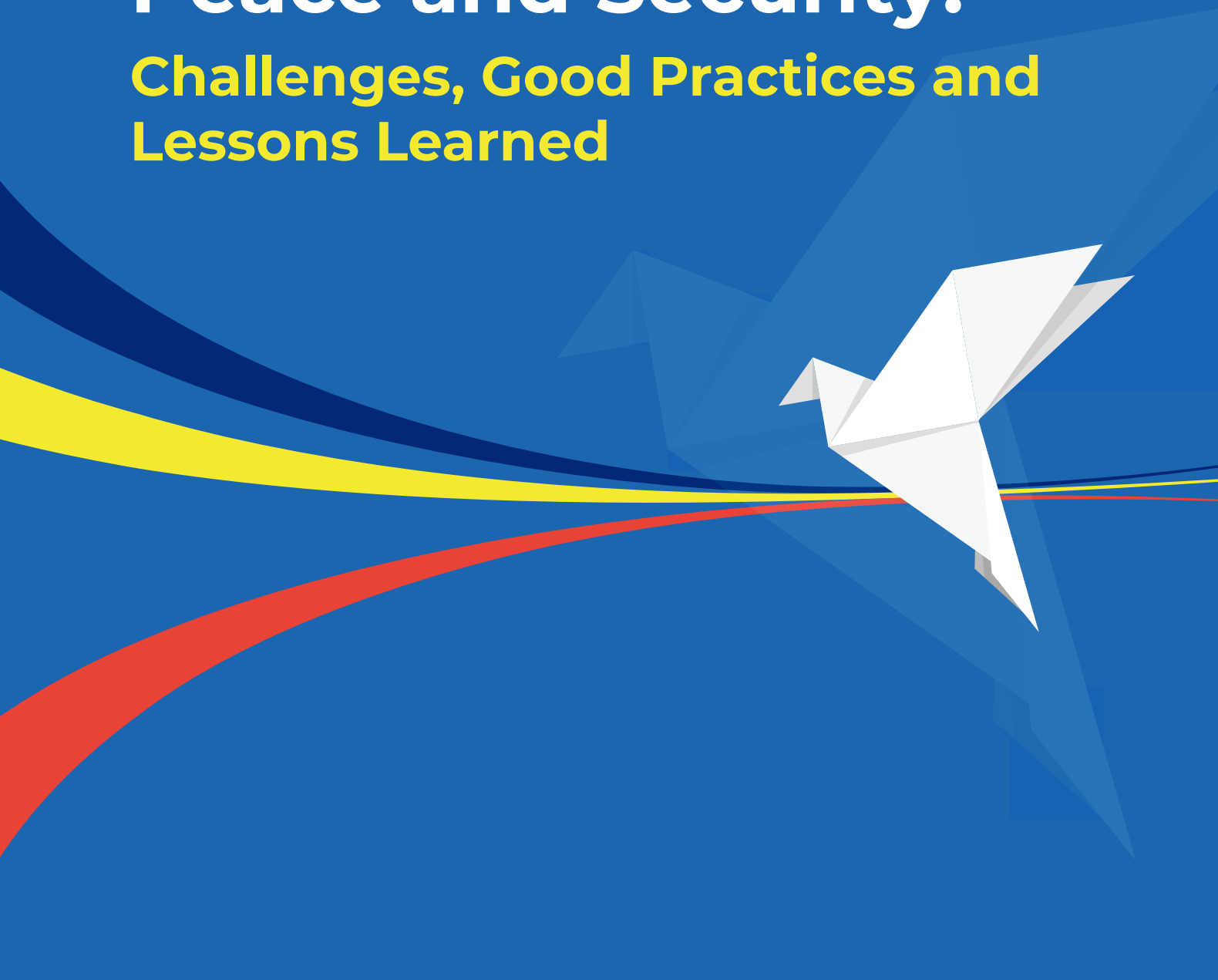
ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation

UN WOMEN

# Localising the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security:

## Challenges, Good Practices and Lessons Learned



# LOCALIZING THE ASEAN REGIONAL PLAN OF ACTION ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY: **CHALLENGES, GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED**

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| **ACW** | ASEAN Committee on Women |
| **AMS** | ASEAN Member States |
| **ASEAN** | Association of Southeast Asian Nations |
| **ASEAN–IPR** | ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation |
| **AWPR** | ASEAN Women for Peace Registry |
| **BPfA** | Beijing Platform for Action |
| **CEDAW** | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| **COP** | Community of Practice |
| **CSOs** | Civil Society Organisations |
| **DNPCC** | National Directorate for Community Conflict Prevention (Timor-Leste) |
| **EIF** | Elsie Initiative Fund |
| **GAD** | Gender and Development |
| **GEWE** | Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment |
| **GBV** | Gender-based Violence |
| **ICAN** | International Civil Society Action Network |
| **JMC** | Joint Memorandum Circular |
| **MAE** | Ministry of State Administration (Timor-Leste) |
| **MEAL** | Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning |
| **MOI** | Ministry of Interior (Timor-Leste) |
| **MPS** | Ministry of Public Security (Vietnam) |
| **NAP** | National Action Plan |
| **NPMEC** | National Center for Peacekeeping Forces, Mine and Explosive Remnants of War Clearance (Cambodia) |
| **NSCWPS** | National Steering Committee on Women, Peace and Security (Philippines) |
| **OPAPRU** | Office of the Presidential Advisor on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (Philippines) |
| **PCID** | Philippine Center for Islam and Democracy |
| **PCW** | Philippine Commission on Women |
| **RCAF** | Royal Cambodian Air Force |
| **RPA** | Regional Plan of Action |
| **SC** | Steering Committee |
| **SEI** | Secretary of State for Equality (Timor-Leste) |
| **SGBV** | Sexual and Gender-based Violence |
| **UNSCR** | United Nations Security Council Resolution |
| **WPS** | Women, Peace and Security |
| **WE** | Women's Empowerment and Learning (Thailand) |

# ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

This publication is the product of a collaborative partnership between the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the ASEAN-IPR, UN Women, the United Nations, or any of their affiliated entities.

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Any errors or omissions identified after the launch of this report will be listed on the ASEAN Women, Peace and Security website and the ASEAN-IPR website.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication was made possible through the strategic guidance of the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR) and its Governing Council.

We extend our sincere appreciation for the strong technical guidance and substantive contributions of Kartika Budhi Wijayanti (ASEAN-IPR); Ryce Chanchai, Cristina Fernández Escorza, Catherine Rose Torres, Wai Shan Chan, and Jeremias Gomes, Gaelle Demolis and Yoomi Jun (UN Women).

The development of this knowledge product was supported through the regional project, Empowering Women for Sustainable Peace: Preventing Violence and Promoting Social Cohesion in ASEAN (2021-2025)—an ASEAN-endorsed initiative funded by the Governments of Canada, the United Kingdom and the Republic of Korea, and implemented by UN Women.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

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The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) was endorsed by Member States of the United Nations in 2000. More than 20 years later, the adoption of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security (RPA WPS) in November 2022 marked a significant step forward in advancing the WPS agenda across the ASEAN region. While peace and security are understood in many different ways within the region, all ASEAN Member States (AMS) are committed to addressing conflict and building social harmony – concepts that are at the heart of the WPS agenda.

The ASEAN RPA WPS has been complemented by proactive measures taken by several AMS to localize the RPA by developing their own WPS National Action Plans (NAPs). Viet Nam has developed and adopted a NAP WPS since the RPA was launched in 2022. The Philippines' fourth-generation NAP WPS, spanning 2023-2033, and the Bangsamoro Regional Action Plan on WPS (RAP WPS) 2023-2028, a third-generation subnational action plan, were also informed by the RPA WPS. Indonesia is in the process of developing the third generation NAP WPS which was informed by the RPA WPS. Thailand's first NAP WPS is currently under development, and more recently, Cambodia and Malaysia have expressed a strong interest in localising the WPS agenda through a NAP. ASEAN observer country, Timor-Leste, is also currently implementing its second-generation NAP WPS.

As part of the ongoing efforts to support national-level initiatives to implement the ASEAN RPA WPS, the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR), in partnership with UN Women through the regional project "Empowering Women for Sustainable Peace: Preventing Violence and Promoting Social Cohesion in ASEAN", held a series of four learning sessions for AMS officials in 2022 and 2023 on WPS-related topics. These sessions were designed to strengthen the capacity of both the ASEAN Women Peace Registry and representatives from ASEAN sectoral bodies and institutions.

In December 2023 the *Localisation Toolkit and Guidelines for the ASEAN RPA WPS* was launched by the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW) when Cambodia was Chair, in partnership with UN Women. The Toolkit captures lessons learned and good practices and provides concrete guidance to AMS on how to more effectively implement the WPS agenda in their domestic contexts. AMS were encouraged to draw on the Localisation Toolkit when designing and implementing their own national response, with AMS encouraged to develop specific WPS National Action Plans.

In June 2024 ASEAN-IPR and UN Women organized the first ASEAN NAP WPS Academy, a regional training workshop aimed at strengthening the capacity of AMS officials engaged in the development and/or implementation of NAPs WPS. In April 2025 ASEAN-IPR and UN Women organized the second NAP WPS Academy, which aimed to extend the capacity-building on NAPs WPS to a wider

range of government officials, as well as including representatives from national civil society organisations (CSOs) working to promote gender equality and women's rights. It is a good practice principle that civil society is an important partner, both in designing and implementing NAPs WPS, because they have invaluable expertise and their trusted relationships with communities mean they can act as important intermediaries in sensitive contexts where trust and social cohesion may be low.

This knowledge product aims to capture the good practice and lessons learned shared at the two ASEAN NAP WPS Academies. The two training activities sought to share the most up-to-date approaches to developing so-called "high impact" NAPs WPS, which build on lessons learned from the previous 112 NAPs WPS that have been developed around the world, including the previous iterations by the Philippines (which is now on its fourth NAP WPS) and Indonesia and Timor-Leste (which are now both on their second NAPs WPS). This Report also seeks to offer practical guidance on addressing some of the common challenges raised by participants during the NAP Academies, such as lack of sustained political will, lack of both human and financial resources, lack of buy-in from key ministries, lack of engagement of civil society and weaknesses in the NAP framework itself, which may later undermine implementation.

### Box 1: ASEAN is driving multiple initiatives to support AMS to implement the WPS agenda

Since the adoption of the Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security in ASEAN by ASEAN Leaders at the 31st ASEAN Summit in 2017, ASEAN has set important milestones in implementing the WPS agenda through concerted multisectoral efforts and partnerships. The ASEAN Women for Peace Registry (AWPR) was established under the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR) in 2018 aiming to contribute to the implementation of the Joint Statement on Promoting WPS in ASEAN. The ASEAN Committee on Women, the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children and the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation have also all aligned their efforts more closely to support collective actions that mainstream the WPS Agenda.

In August 2019 ASEAN organized the first Regional Symposium on Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda,[1] the first regional inter-sectoral dialogue since the endorsement of the Joint Statement. It demonstrated ASEAN's commitment to advancing the WPS agenda and marked an important starting point to establish cross-sectoral collaboration on WPS between the ASEAN Sociocultural Community and Political and Security Community pillars. The Regional Symposium also saw progress on advancing intersectoral dialogue to operationalize the AWPR. With the support of UN Women, ASEAN also committed to hosting a side event on "Advancing Women, Peace and Security in ASEAN" during the Asia-Pacific Regional Review of the twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration

1 Regional Symposium on Implementing the WPS Agenda in ASEAN on 22-23 August 2019 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, was hosted by the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Cambodia, in collaboration with the ASEAN Secretariat, ACW, ACWC and with support from the ASEAN-United States Agency for International Development (USAID) PROSPECT and UN Women.

and Platform for Action (Beijing+25 Review) in November 2019 to identify good practices on WPS across the region in the lead up to the twentieth anniversary of UNSC resolution 1325 (2000) in 2020.

One of the key outcomes of the 2019 Regional Symposium was ASEAN's commitment to producing a Regional Study on WPS that takes stock of progress, reviews trends, critically examines persistent and emerging challenges and captures lessons learned across the region.[2] This work culminated in the endorsement of the ASEAN RPA WPS in 2022. That document was developed by an Advisory Group comprised of officials from all three pillars of ASEAN and led by Cambodia as chair of ASEAN in 2022. The same Advisory Group is still chaired by Cambodia and is now responsible for overseeing implementation. Subsequently, they launched the RPA WPS Localisation Toolkit which provides key steps for how to develop NAP WPS, including good practice globally. ASEAN also has a WPS knowledge hub – wps.asean.org – which is being administered with UN Women support.

An ASEAN WPS Community of Practice is currently being established, which is intended to help people working on WPS to access and share knowledge, collaborate, learn and reinforce implementation strategies. The COP was included in RPA WPS as Priority Action 2.2.6, and will sit under the ASEAN Advisory Group with UN Women's support and secretariat services provided by ASEAN IPR. At the time of writing, consultations were underway to gather ideas on how the COP should operate, with more than 100 people already offering their insights. The thematic priorities already identified include the following ones: women's leadership in peace and security; protection and support for women and girls; strengthening policy and institutional frameworks; and including men and boys more effectively in the WPS agenda. For more information on the COP, ASEAN stakeholders are encouraged to check the website www.asean-aipr.org.

2 https://asean.org/book/asean-regional-study-on-women-peace-and-security/

# 2. BACKGROUND CONTEXT

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## A. UNDERSTANDING THE GLOBAL WPS AGENDA

The Asian region is proud that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, endorsed in 1995, is considered the global starting point for the WPS agenda. The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) called for strategic action to understand "the effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation" and for specific recognition of women's leadership as a "fundamental force for...conflict resolution and the promotion of lasting peace at all levels". Five years later, the United Nations Security Council responded to the call from women activists in the BPfA by endorsing the historic women, peace and security agenda with the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on 31 October 2000.

UNSCR 1325 (2000) on WPS reaffirms the critical role of women in preventing and resolving conflicts and in peacebuilding. Promoting the WPS agenda commits countries to ensuring that women and girls are meaningfully involved in the decisions and processes that impact their own peace and security. It also means that women and girls are included as critical partners in efforts by government and non-government stakeholders both to prevent violence and to mitigate its impacts. The WPS agenda is comprised of four pillars, as summarized in Figure 1 below:

*Figure 1: Four pillars of the WPS framework*

| | |
|---|---|
| **PREVENTION** | Prevention of conflict and all forms of violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations. |
| **PARTICIPATION** | Women's equal participation and gender equality in peace and security decision-making processes at all levels |
| **PROTECTION** | Women and girls are protected from all forms of sexual and gender-based violence and their rights are protected and promoted in conflict situations. |
| **RELIEF & RECOVERY** | Specific relief needs of women are met and their capacities to act as agents in relief and recovery are strengthened in conflict and post-conflict situations |

Since the adoption of UNSCR 1325 (2000) on WPS, the United Nations Security Council has adopted nine additional resolutions on women, peace and security, which provide more detailed guidance on specific aspects of war and its impact on women, while addressing issues such as sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking in persons and the gendered dimensions of peacekeeping. In 2013 Recommendation No. 30 under the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) was also adopted, detailing the rights of women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict reconstruction, and addressing the situation of women in all stages of the conflict cycle.[3] It requires signatories to collect data on the women, peace and security agenda and report on compliance with UN benchmarks.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development endorsed in 2015 also recognizes gender equality and women's empowerment as central to peace, security and sustainable development. CEDAW's General Recommendation 37, agreed to in 2018, focuses on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change.[4] Most recently, CEDAW's General Recommendation 30, agreed to in 2024, specifically focuses on "the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems" and includes a range of clear recommendations for action to ensure parity in decision-making, including in relation to peace and security.[5] All of these documents are important reference documents for AMS seeking to develop or implement their own NAPs WPS.

### Box 2: UNSCR 2242 (2015) highlights that countries need to address both traditional and emerging security issues that impact WPS

In 2015 the UN completed a major review of global peacebuilding efforts,[6] which provided updated guidance on how to more effectively implement the WPS agenda. Subsequently, the Security Council endorsed UNSCR 2242 (2015). The resolution reiterated the importance of national governments developing and implementing properly resourced NAPs WPS. Importantly, UNSCR 2242 (2015) also called on Member States to update their responses to WPS issues by considering how to address modern day security threats in a more gender-responsive way. UNSCR 2242 (2015) acknowledged:

> *"...the changing global context of peace and security, in particular relating to rising violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism, the increased numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons, the impacts of climate change and the global nature of health pandemics, and in this regard reiterating its intention to increase attention to women, peace and security as a cross-cutting subject in all relevant thematic areas of work on its agenda, including threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts..."*

3 https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/764506?ln=en&v=pdf

4 https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1626306?ln=en&v=pdf

5 https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4067705?ln=en&v=pdf

6 High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (S/2015/682) and the Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture (S/2015/490).

Some countries already have specific national plans to address these emerging security issues, but they tend to be informed by little or no gender analysis and do not usually include specific, gender-responsive actions. UNSCR 2242 (2015) encourages AMS to review any relevant plans, for example in relation to climate change, counter-terrorism, health pandemics and cybersecurity and to identify specific issues that impact women and girls and specific national responses. Alternatively, AMS can also use NAPs WPS as an opportunity to address these emerging security threats.

Notably, with the adoption of its fourth NAP WPS (2023-2033), the Philippines became the first country in ASEAN to recognize cybersecurity considerations as part of its WPS commitments. The NAP WPS includes specific actions on ensuring women's meaningful representation, participation and leadership in cybersecurity planning, design, governance and law enforcement efforts, including strengthening the capacities of women's activists on cybersecurity and digital peacebuilding. In contrast, the inaugural National Cybersecurity Plan 2023-2028, released by the Department of Information and Communications Technology in February 2024, is not gender responsive in its formulation.[7] The NAP also identifies the need to address how climate change compounds risks for women and specifically encourages women's leadership in community-level climate adaptation strategies and in resource management decisions.[8]

## B. IMPLEMENTING THE WPS AGENDA IN ASEAN

Within ASEAN, the WPS agenda has been growing in importance, as a range of traditional and emerging security threats have highlighted the importance of working together to develop strategic action plans that will enable AMS to more proactively promote peace and social harmony within and across their countries. The Philippines was the first AMS to take action to localize the WPS agenda, developing their first NAP WPS 15 years ago, in 2010. They are now implementing their fourth iteration of a NAP WPS. The current NAP has been developed to provide guidance over a 10-year period in recognition of the need for sustained, consistent action over time. Indonesia has also developed two NAPs WPS. The first NAP ran for five years from 2014-2019 and focused on preventing and addressing social conflicts. The second NAP, covering 2020-2025, expanded its scope to include emerging security issues like the prevention of violent extremism, intolerance and land disputes.

7 https://wps.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Philippines-WPS-Country-Brief.pdf

8 Ibid.

In Timor-Leste the first NAP (2016-20) focused on women's participation in decision-making and conflict resolution processes, and on their representation in key positions of leadership. The second iteration (2024-2028) is structured around the four WPS pillars (Participation, Prevention, Protection and Peacebuilding). It articulates a comprehensive strategy to address both traditional security challenges and emerging security risks, including disasters induced by climate change, cybersecurity and human trafficking.

Following the major UN review of peace operations in 2015, AMS strengthened their commitment to the WPS agenda, culminating in the *Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security in ASEAN* by ASEAN Leaders at the 31st ASEAN Summit in 2017. Subsequently, ASEAN adopted the ASEAN RPA WPS in November 2022 at the 44th and 45th ASEAN Summits.

The RPA WPS is a landmark regional policy framework that complements other relevant plans, such as the *RPA to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalization and Violent Extremism* (2018), the *ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework* (2020) and the *ASEAN Regional Framework on Protection, Gender and Inclusion in Disaster Management* (2021).

*Figure 2: ASEAN RPA WPS matrix of actions (from the Localisation Toolkit)*

| RPA WPS Strategic outcome 1 | RPA WPS Strategic outcome 2 | RPA WPS Strategic outcome 3 |
|---|---|---|
| Protection of the rights of women, young women and girls, including those of marginalized groups, in policies, practices and security, including the protection | Women's full, meaningful and equal participation in institutions, organisations and decision-making processes relatd to peace and security, including in leadership positions | ASEAN sectoral bodies, institutions and member states play an active role in contributing to global, regional and national conflict prevention, and prevention of violence, disasters and other threats to peace and security, with principles of the WPS agenda central to those activities |
| **RPA WPS Strategic outcome 4** | **RPA WPS Strategic outcome 5** | **RPA WPS Strategic outcome 6** |
| Peace and security institutions, mechanisms and processes are successfully preventing Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) | The needs of women and girls are met in relief and recovery processes at regional, national and local levels and women have equal and meaningful participation in these processes, including in positions of deision-making and leadership | Implementation, coordination and monitoring & evaluation (M&E) infrastructure and mechanisms to support the RPA WPS are established and operational, with specific measures in place to adapt and change based on ongoing consultations and findings from progress reports, evaluations and data on WPS |

# 3. DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING A NAP WPS: GOOD PRACTICE AND LESSONS LEARNED

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The *Localisation Toolkit and Guidelines for the ASEAN RPA WPS*, produced in 2023, provides substantial guidance for AMS to consider when developing their own NAPs WPS. This Report seeks to complement the Localisation Toolkit by providing updated guidance and good practice advice based on the information gathered through the two ASEAN NAP WPS Academies held in 2024 and 2025. Readers are encouraged to read this document alongside the Localisation Toolkit. In that context, the subsequent sections do not attempt to provide comprehensive guidance on NAP design or implementation, but to address critical issues raised by AMS participants.

## A. IMPLEMENTING THE WPS AGENDA THROUGH A HIGH IMPACT NAP

A key feature of the ASEAN RPA WPS is its emphasis on **"localisation" of the WPS agenda** as essential to making a meaningful impact on the lives of women and girls living across ASEAN. With that in mind, the *Localisation Toolkit and Guidelines for the ASEAN RPA WPS* provides detailed guidance on how AMS can implement the WPS agenda at home, most notably, by recommending the development of a high-impact NAP WPS, as described in Figure 3 below.

*Figure 3: Elements of a High Impact NAP WPS (from the Localisation Toolkit)*

The focus on designing "high impact" NAPs WPS resulted from the "Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325" published in 2015. The Global Study encouraged countries to ensure that their NAPs were more practical, focused, locally-tailored and locally-owned. The study found that there were four key elements required to produce a high-impact NAP, namely, an inclusive design process and an established coordination system for implementation, strong and sustained political will, identified and allocated implementation resources and a results-based monitoring and evaluation plan.[9]

These issues will be discussed in more detail below. The Global Study encouraged countries to more explicitly reflect on how the NAP WPS can ensure long-term, tangible improvements in the lives of women and girls in the context of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. NAPs WPS were encouraged to focus more systematically on identifying key results that would help track progress in real life. Rather than producing long narratives alone, they were urged to include concrete, practical, properly-resourced actions that would lead to real improvements in the lives of women and girls.

The key elements described in Figure 3 are common to many NAPs across a range of different sectors. However, the complexity of addressing WPS issues means no one-size-fits all approach exists. Some countries, such as Indonesia, the Philippines and Timor-Leste, have ongoing or relatively recent experience with dealing with violent conflict – whether experienced nationally, or in certain regions or provinces of their countries – which has strongly influenced their priorities.

Their NAPs focus heavily on peacebuilding and social cohesion, although the Philippines' most recent NAP is also notable for identifying cybersecurity and climate security as emerging priorities. Other countries, such as Viet Nam, have a NAP WPS that addresses a range of issues, both domestic (e.g. supporting conflict prevention, addressing non-traditional security challenges, and responding to gender-based violence in the context of natural disasters) and international (e.g. supporting women peacekeepers).

Given the wide scope of the WPS agenda, **lessons learned from other countries highlight the importance of being realistic when identifying NAP priorities, to ensure the plan remains practical, focused, and implementable within available resources.** It is also important to consider what other policies or plans may already be in place, such as a National GBV Plan, a National Cybersecurity Plan or National Security Plan, which could be reviewed through a gender lens and updated to integrate specific gender-sensitive actions.

9 Miki Jacevic, "What makes for an effective WPS national action plan?", 25 March 2019, The Strategist, https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/what-makes-for-an-effective-wps-national-action-plan/#

## Box 3: Is a NAP WPS needed if a country already has policies on gender equality or domestic violence?

During the NAP WPS Academies and in discussions with national counterparts, the question arose as to whether a NAP WPS is still needed if a national policy is already in place that seeks to promote gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) and/or to address what different AMS call domestic violence or GBV. Does a NAP WPS risk duplication of effort and/or a dilution of limited resources, or does it add something different?

The WPS agenda was developed to specifically address conflict-related (and in some AMS, disaster-related) SGBV. SGBV, when it is related to domestic violence, does not fall under WPS per se. Mechanisms in place during peacetime—when rule of law functions and essential services are available—often fail to address conflict-related sexual violence, where SGBV is used as a weapon of war and impunity prevails amid weakened legal systems. The WPS agenda in a NAP aims to coordinate and engage a different set of actors and has a different set of objectives, primarily for security and political actors and those in higher-level decision-making and women's CSOs who are engaged in peacebuilding and prevention of risks of conflicts and in peace processes.

In theory, one NAP can attempt to address GEWE, GBV and WPS issues, on the basis that all of these issues are related to strengthening women's rights and their safety, particularly in smaller countries with fewer human and financial resources to implement multiple NAPs. However, in practice, the complexity of dealing with SGBV in conflict-affected countries has justified the development of separate NAPs WPS. Experience within ASEAN and globally also suggests that most GEWE and GBV policies have been formulated in ways that do not sufficiently reflect on the root causes of violence, nor have they addressed the fundamental institutional and societal issues that are critical to mitigating violence and to proactively building social cohesion and well-being.

Additionally, GEWE and GBV policies are often spearheaded by women's ministries or commissions, which are often insufficiently connected to the security sector bodies whose buy-in is essential to women's security. Certainly, externally facing defence forces are not included in GEWE and GBV plans, and even police forces are often not actively involved in GBV policies, despite their critical role in providing justice to survivors. A NAP WPS should be led or provided oversight at the highest level, such as the Prime Minister or President's Office, for its implementation is the responsibility of influential line agencies, not just a Ministry of Women's Affairs or a women's machinery. Moreover, a NAP WPS is supported from different funding sources in the national budget.

All of these factors mean that, in practice, stand-alone WPS plans can be a very useful tool for bringing together a wider cross-section of national stakeholders. This includes both those agencies and CSOs working to promote gender equality and those working to address a range of security threats, including defence and law and justice actors, and also officials and experts working on climate security, cybersecurity, migration security and biosecurity.

## B. BUILDING AND SUSTAINING POLITICAL WILL

**Political will** is a key factor in ensuring that a NAP WPS is well-designed, properly resourced and effectively coordinated to ensure effective implementations. Addressing fundamental issues related to national peace and security, social cohesion and the role of the state and of individuals in ensuring the safety of women and girls is a complex and sensitive task. In order to engage with these issues in meaningful ways, it is vital to have the support of leaders at the highest levels of government. **This requires more than just securing the support of women's ministries or national commissions on women. It also requires support from senior political leaders** – ideally the President or Prime Minister, but also leaders of the defence forces, the police service and any other security or civil protection forces with a role in addressing security threats.

In reality, feedback has indicated that even where political will in support of a NAP WPS is present, this may still not translate into the requisite allocation of human and financial resources needed to implement the WPS agenda. A key lesson learned is that, where possible, **the NAP WPS should be accompanied by a budget proposal** – even if only at a high level initially – with more detailed breakdowns to be developed later as individual agency operational plans are formulated. If the NAP WPS is to be signed off by the Cabinet, the budget proposal should accompany it, so that decision-makers understand – and support – the allocation of resources for its implementation.

To ensure the endorsement of any such budget, officials may need to offer specific budget briefings to relevant Treasury or Ministry of Finance officials and possibly even to the Cabinet directly. If possible, the Minister with responsibility for the NAP WPS may provide such briefings, and the latter should be supported with capacity-building and exposure to other jurisdictions' good practices to become an active champion of the WPS agenda.

Another avenue for building and ensuring high-level political support for NAPs WPS is by **engaging with parliamentarians to build their understanding of why the WPS agenda is important and how it connects to their mandates.** Parliamentarians have a key role to play in terms of passing laws to address WPS, for example, in relation to gender equality, national security, climate action and cybersecurity. They are also responsible for reviewing and endorsing national budget allocations. They also have oversight powers through their parliamentary committees or legislative commissions, which can be used to review implementation, both to check that it is on track and to make recommendations for improving implementation.

### Box 4: ASEAN parliamentarians can be important sources of political will

In 2017 UNDP published a handbook, entitled "Parliaments as Partners: Supporting the Women, Peace and Security Agenda",[10] which provides detailed guidance on how to engage with parliamentarians to build their support for WPS action. Parliamentarians can call on the government to develop a NAP WPS and make suggestions for the NAP's content, drawing on inputs that they gather from their own constituents. They can also lobby for and oversee the budget for the NAP WPS and use their oversight powers to review the NAP's implementation.

Within the ASEAN region, the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) operates as a network for ASEAN parliamentarians, who come together regularly to discuss important issues, including gender equality and WPS. In 2022 the AIPA General Assembly endorsed the *Resolution on Promoting the Role of Women Parliamentarians in Advancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda*.

The Resolution called on AIPA Member Parliaments to undertake the following: to monitor implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000); to use their powers to pass laws and provide budgets in support of the WPS agenda; to use the oversight of the SDGs to also review implementation of the WPS agenda; to strengthen the ecosystem that supports women peacekeepers from ASEAN; to support measures to address violence against women in conflict and remove barriers to women's participation in peace processes; and to provide capacity-building to parliamentary staff on WPS issues.[11]

This Resolution provides a very strong foundation for national advocates of the WPS agenda to work with their own parliamentarians to build their commitment to the WPS agenda and to strengthen their understanding of how they can use their powers to drive implementation of WPS priorities.

**Security sector actors – responsible for peace and security at home and abroad – are among the most critical stakeholders to secure buy-in for the WPS agenda.** This includes police services, defence forces/military forces, civil protection offices, intelligence agencies and other domestic security actors. Depending on the local context, any or all of these bodies will have actions to take under any national WPS. However, experience has shown within ASEAN that the WPS agenda is more often led by a central coordinating agency, such as the President's Office and Commission of Women (Philippines), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Viet Nam) or Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection (Indonesia).

10 https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/vn/Parliarments-as-Partners-Supporting-Women-Peace-and-Security-Agenda-Handbook_web_EN.pdf

11 https://aipalync.org/storage/documents/main/resolution-on-promoting-the-role-of-women-parliamentarians-in-advancing-women-peace-and-security-agenda_1713497564.pdf

**It is crucial to build security sector officials' understanding of how the WPS agenda relates to their work and to actively involve them in designing the NAP WPS.** In an encouraging development, there is an increasing tendency to have security sector bodies lead the NAP process or co-chair key pillars of the NAP. For example, in Timor-Leste, the Ministry of Interior has spearheaded the NAP and is the institution leading the implementation.

### Box 5: Building the capacity of security sector agencies to implement the WPS agenda

Launched in 2017, the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations is a programme funded by Canada in partnership with the United Nations, which focuses specifically on supporting uniformed women serving in police and military roles, in the context of the WPS agenda. Specifically, the Elsie Initiative Fund (EIF) works with countries to target funding towards locally-identified WPS priorities. The EIF is open to applications for all ASEAN members.

In 2024 Cambodia became the first ASEAN Member State to partner with the EIF. In July 2024 EIF launched a report that provide a comprehensive set of recommendations aimed at promoting gender equality in the Cambodian armed forces,[12] which is now being used to guide the EIF's support to Cambodia. Notably, Cambodia is the 25th highest troop contributing country to United Nations peacekeeping, and currently deploys 766 military personnel, among which 14 per cent are women. Although Cambodia does not yet have a NAP WPS, the EIF proposal is being used to channel resources towards addressing a critical WPS priority for the country.

Adopting a whole-of-institution approach, the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) will establisha cross-departmental working group to implement the EIF project, comprising members from the National Center for Peacekeeping Forces (NPMEC), the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ministry of Women's Affairs and other key government partners.[13] In close partnership with the NPMEC and RCAF, the project will be managed by UN Women Cambodia.

12 https://elsiefund.org/2024/07/30/cambodia/

13 https://wps.asean.org/news/cambodia-receives-funding-from-the-elsie-initiative-fund-to-identify-barriers-to-the-deployment-of-uniformed-women-to-united-nations-peace-operations/

## C. ENGAGING WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

The call for women's voices to be more systematically and more meaningfully included in conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities originally came from civil society during the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, also known as the Beijing Conference. The resulting 1995 Beijing Declaration specifically included women and armed conflict as one of the 12 priority areas of action. Since that time, the WPS agenda has been strongly advocated for by women's civil society across the world, with many women peacebuilders leading efforts globally, regionally and nationally to ensure that women's voices and priorities are heard and actioned.

Within ASEAN, the women's movement has also been active in advocating for action to address WPS. During the development of the ASEAN RPA WPS, the Philippine Center for Islam and Democracy (PCID) was engaged to actively facilitate the involvement of CSOs across the ASEAN region. Consultations were organized with different sectors of civil society to ensure diverse organisations and stakeholders had a forum for offering insights and ideas to shape the drafting of the RPA WPS. These included consultations with CSOs across the region and specific meetings with youth organisations, academics and researchers and organisations of persons with disabilities.

### Box 6: Showcasing successful CSO engagement with the WPS agenda

The ASEAN RPA WPS recognizes the pivotal role of CSOs and the diverse conditions that shape their ability to participate effectively. To raise awareness and elevate the efforts of CSOs, UN Women launched the CSOs Peace Award Competition in November 2024, entitled "CSOs PEACE Award: CSOs Competition on Good Practices in Women Peace and Security in Southeast Asia".[14] The competition targets CSOs actively working on WPS in the ASEAN region and Timor-Leste. The aim is to highlight innovative, replicable and impactful initiatives that empower women and promote their participation in peace and traditional and non-traditional security initiatives. By sharing their narratives, UN Women aims to celebrate the achievements of those CSOs, to create a platform for learning collaboration and to raise awareness of the WPS agenda.

The competition aims to increase such awareness by sharing concrete examples and success stories of grassroots initiatives. UN Women also used the competition to collect and compile a catalogue of good practices on WPS in ASEAN by identifying and documenting innovative and impactful initiatives by CSOs that effectively empower women in peace and security. The competition also provides a structured platform for participating CSOs to share their experiences, foster collaboration and enable the replication of successful WPS initiatives in diverse contexts.

14 https://wps.asean.org/events/peace-award/

Lastly, the competition aims to celebrate the contributions of CSOs in advancing the WPS agenda in the region. The competition is open to CSOs operating in the ASEAN Region and Timor-Leste. Submissions must document initiatives from these countries. The winners of the inaugural 2025 competition included a range of CSOs working on conflict prevention, mediation, media advocacy for peace, and the prevention of violent extremism through reintegration initiatives.[15] A catalogue of initiatives submitted for consideration for the award will be launched in mid-2025.

Experience from ASEAN countries with established NAPs – Indonesia, the Philippines and, most recently, Viet Nam – along with observer country Timor-Leste, demonstrates that **there is tangible value in including civil society in the design and implementation of NAPs**. Civil society – a broad term that includes both CSOs, academics, professional associations, unions, community groups and the media – often bring valuable technical expertise on gender equality, peacebuilding, promotion of social cohesion at the community level and WPS issues that governments can tap into for the benefit of their drafting process.

Academics can be engaged to undertake specific research. The media can be a partner in public awareness raising and education campaigns. CSOs also often have valuable relationships of trust with different ethnic, religious and/or marginalized communities that can be leveraged to discuss sensitive topics and collect insights in relation to specific WPS issues affecting those groups.

### Box 7: Engaging with CSOs can strengthen both NAP design and implementation

Adviser ASEAN countries have been increasingly recognising the value of more systematically including CSOs in their WPS efforts, including the process of NAP design and implementation. The Philippines is globally recognized as a good practice example of CSO engagement.[16] As far back as 2007, a civil society-initiated consultation process was undertaken to reflect on national WPS priorities, which included the then-Office of the Presidential on the Peace Process and the then-National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women. The output document produced was adopted by the Philippine Government in March 2010, which resulted in the first NAP WPS in the Philippines – and in ASEAN. CSOs that participated in the consultation process banded together to form Women Engaged in Action on UNSCR 1325 (WE Act 1325), a national network of peace, human rights and women's organisations. WE Act 1325, both

15 https://wps.asean.org/stories/announcement-peace-award/

16 This case study on CSO engagement in Philippines in support of the NAP WPS was published by Oxfam Filipinas: https://oxfam.org.ph/download/11-point-civil-society-women-peace-and-security-agenda/?wpdmdl=3401&refresh=67ff3813192561744779283

individual members and as a network, took on various initiatives through the three generations of NAP WPS. The network was also involved in advocacy for the Regional Action Plan on WPS under the newly established Bangsamoro Government.

The crafting of a new NAP WPS under the current administration provided an opportunity for CSOs to regroup and develop a common agenda on WPS. WE Act 1325, in partnership with UN Women and Oxfam Pilipinas, initiated a consultation process that involved 23 community-level dialogues, 5 area agenda building consultations and a national conference. A total of 114 groups participated, including 36 CSOs, 35 WROs, 17 youth groups, 11 indigenous peoples' groups and 15 disability organisations. The process resulted in the development of the 11-Point CSO Agenda on Women, Peace and Security, which was eventually included in the fourth Philippine NAP on WPS. The NAP itself identifies the "explicit recognition of the contributions of civil society organisations to the entire process of peacebuilding and conflict transformation" as one of four key features of the new NAP, and operationalizes this by including CSO representation on the NAP Steering Committee.

## D. CONSULTING WITH COMMUNITIES, AFFECTED PEOPLE AND MARGINALIZED GROUPS

One of the most important lessons learned from the successive NAPs WPS developed over the years is the critical value of consulting with the communities and individuals directly affected by the peace and security issues that the NAP seeks to address. Years ago, policy documents tended to be treated as opportunities for "experts" to be called in to provide their specialist analysis on what they saw as problems and their related technical advice on potential responses. Long years of experience however, has shown that this top-down, expert-led approach has not been successful in driving transformative change, particularly on such issues as gender equality, conflict prevention and social cohesion.

Good practice from ASEAN and beyond highlights the **value of broad consultations – both to identify the key issues a NAP WPS should address and to design effective responses**. As discussed earlier, CSOs are often effective as trusted intermediaries in such consultation processes, given their strong community trust, particularly, among marginalized or vulnerable communities such as women from ethnic or religious minorities, and women with disabilities. A good example is provided from Viet Nam, which launched their first NAP WPS in January 2024 (with support from UN Women). The Government supported substantial consultations before designing their final NAP. In August 2023 they conducted a nationwide survey to assess local achievements and measures aligned with the objectives and pillars of the WPS agenda, while also identifying each locality's needs for developing mechanisms, policies and mobilising resources to support implementation. The nationwide consultation process for the NAP WPS began in October 2023, with input from 40 out of 63 provinces and centrally governed cities, over 20 committees, ministries and sectors, as well as a range of political, social and professional organisations.

It is also critical for governments to use consultation processes during both the development and implementation of NAPs WPS to **build trust and hear directly from under-represented groups, who are often spoken "for" rather than "with"**. This was done in Philippines, which reached out to a very diverse range of stakeholder to implement the principle that "no-one is left behind" in practice. Philippines' 4th NAP WPS is the first NAP WPS in ASEAN to explicitly address the needs of key vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, indigenous groups and LGBTIQ+ groups through the reference in the NAP to "women in all their diverse and intersecting identities".

Consultation is an opportunity to demonstrate a government's commitment to meaningful inclusion and to leaving no one behind, by showing a genuine interest in the voices and experiences of those who are often excluded. **Understanding the priorities and perspectives of under-represented groups, grounded in their lived experiences, adds significant value to shaping and guiding NAP processes**. These insights are essential for addressing inequalities that undermine social cohesion and for ensuring more inclusive and effective implementation. Consultation can inform the design of the NAP WPS, but it is also important to continue to engage with affected communities throughout the implementation process, including when monitoring the impact of the NAP (see section (g) for more).

### Box 8: Engaging with communities during both design and implementation processes

In **Thailand**, the process to develop the NAP WPS has been highly participatory. With support from UN Women, the Government has engaged in consultations with CSOs/NGOs, academics and communities across the country, in particular, those affected by violent conflict unrest. Capacity-building initiatives were supported for local authorities and CSOs across Southern, Northern and Northeastern border provinces, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange on WPS issues.

As part of those capacity-building efforts, UN Women partnered with the Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development to introduce initiatives on women's economic empowerment as a means of promoting social cohesion and conflict prevention, as well as establishing women-led crisis preparedness groups in the Southern Border Provinces. These efforts led to the creation of community-based WPS Implementation Mechanisms in the Southern, Northern and Northeastern Border Provinces, including establishing WPS Focal Points, WPS Networks and Women's Empowerment and Learning (WE) Centres, that bring together local governments, academics, CSOs and women leaders working on WPS-related issues. For example, in the Surin Province (a border province with Cambodia), a community group of women in Salaloi gather every Friday to share their knowledge and engage in activities that enrich their lives, fostering intergenerational dialogue with younger women in the community. [17]

17 https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/stories/feature-story/2025/03/for-all-women-and-girls-yanin-supasa

The WE Centre serves as a critical convening space, providing a platform to discuss pressing WPS issues, foster meaningful dialogue, and strengthen collective advocacy efforts. In Yala Province, two WE Centres have now been established, with the first established in 2024 at the existing Coordination Centre for Children and Women and a second centre established in February 2025 that managed by the Women's Peace Association, in collaboration with women leaders from all eight districts.[18] Pattani has two WE Centres. One is located in the Yuyo community, led by a group of widows and single mothers who have turned to mushroom farming for economic resilience. The second is a collaborative initiative involving CSOs, including the network of Civic Women for Peace, the Fasai Association and the Buddhists for Peace Network.[19] In the Northern Border region, a WE Centre is established in Chiang Rai to empower women ethnic minorities and equip them with skills to respond to crises in their communities. Currently, six WE Centres have been established in border regions. Together, these centres provide women, youth and community members with opportunities for knowledge-exchange, leadership training, digital security and peacebuilding activities.

The WE Centres are bringing together a very diverse range of CSOs and women, whose perspectives are invaluable to informing Thailand's NAP WPS. As a result of the WE Centres, CSOs and women, equipped with their strengthened WPS-related skills, will be more ready to participate in national mechanisms and activities under the NAP WPS. The feedback gathered at the WE Centres from the WPS Network will also inform ongoing implementation and monitoring of the NAP WPS once it is endorsed, providing important conflict analysis and priorities for peacebuilding and social cohesion initiatives.

One of the most important groups of people whose perspectives have informed the design of NAPs WPS are women themselves, in particular, women peacebuilders. ASEAN has a long and proud history of women being recognized as mediators and consensus-builders in their own communities. These **women peacebuilders have important insights and a special understanding both of the causes of unrest and societal division and also of effective strategies on how to build trust and address conflict**. Targeted consultations can be conducted with women peacebuilders by leveraging existing networks and programmes that have brought women together around protection and peacebuilding efforts (see boxes 7 and 8 for examples).

18 https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/stories/news/2025/03/two-new-initiatives-launched-on-gender-equality-and-peacebuilding-in-thailand

19 Ibid.

## Box 9: Women mediators can provide important insights on WPS

The WPS agenda has been driven from the outset by local women peacebuilders advocating to ensure that women's voices are heard in all forums working towards conflict prevention and peacebuilding. To this day, the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders brings together CSOs from more than 140 countries to ensure the inclusion of marginalized voices in the WPS agenda.[20] Similarly, the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) was funded by one of the drafters of UNSCR 1325 (2000) and continues to provide advice and support to women peacebuilders around the world, including in ASEAN. Across the world, there are numerous regional networks of women mediators. Within Asia, there already exists the Southeast Asian Women Peace Mediators network, which operates as a platform for Southeast Asian women engaged in mediating, negotiating, and facilitating peace processes.[21]

Some countries also have their own networks of specialist mediators, including **women mediators, whose perspectives are critical to the NAP design and implementation process.** For example, since 2016 the Timor-Leste Ministry of Interior's National Directorate for Community Conflict Prevention (DNPCC) has been working to strengthen its gender-responsive mediation practices, as part of the first and second NAP WPS. With support from UN Women, over 200 DNPCC mediators and coordinators have been trained across 13 municipalities and the Special Administrative Region of Oé-Cusse Ambeno. The mediators were equipped with essential skills and knowledge to conduct mediation and resolve conflicts in a gender-responsive, peaceful and non-violent way, ensuring the needs and voices of women were heard and considered in the peace processes.

At least 30 per cent of the Ministry of Interior's mediators are now women, and they actively promote women as powerful voices of peace and justice. In 2020 a standard guideline was developed for the DNPCC's gender-responsive mediation and a ministerial diploma – now serving as a legal instrument – was approved to define the roles of the DNPCC and its mediators. In 2023 mediators across line ministries were brought together through a more formal Platform called the National Mediation Network. The Network is supported by the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, six other government institutions and one NGO, all with relevant mandates to facilitate mediation processes. The Network aims to reaffirm Timor-Leste's commitment to peaceful alternative dispute resolution and conflict prevention.[22] Timor-Leste's women mediators were closely involved in the development of the second NAP WPS, engaging in specific consultations to share their insights with the drafters. Under the current NAP, women's leadership is recognized as critical to improving security and contributing to peaceful resolution and conflict prevention. The

20 https://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/member/gnwp/

21 https://www.seawpm.com/

22 https://en.tatoli.tl/2023/07/31/unw-and-moi-launch-national-mediation-network-to-promote-alternative-dispute-resolution/16/#

promotion of gender-responsive conflict prevention at the community level was a priority which Ministry of Interior (MOI), the Directorate General of Security and Conflict Prevention and the DNPCC identified.

The women mediators are expected to play a critical role in addressing community conflicts and disputes, many categorized as civil cases, such as land dispute, family matters, or other non-criminal issues. In 2025, as part of NAP implementation, the DNPCC (in partnership with UN Women and the local NGO, *Belun*), organized a "Gender-Responsive Conflict Prevention and Resolution Training Workshop" for DNPCC coordinators and mediators across their 13 municipalities and the Special Administrative Region of Oé-Cusse Ambeno. The workshop aims to enhance both DNPCC's institutional capacity and the capacities of over 200 mediators to promote gender-responsive conflict resolution through mediation, and to eliminate gender discrimination and stereotyped behaviours towards women in mediation processes.

## E. PROMOTING COORDINATION ACROSS MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS

Both during the NAP design process and throughout the many years of implementation, feedback has strongly indicated that **coordination across the many stakeholders involved with the NAP is one of the most important issues that will determine success**. Within government, NAPs can involve as few as 5 to as many as 20 or more government agencies and also a range of civil society stakeholders. Without well-designed coordination mechanisms, it can be difficult to keep everyone aligned and working toward common goals.

Early NAPs WPS were often led by a single government body, with relatively simple coordination mechanisms in place that relied on regular meetings for information exchange and for tracking progress. Over time, it has become clear that **coordination must be proactively pursued and adequately resourced**. Increasingly, NAPs are even including a separate pillar focused on how implementation will be coordinated, often as part of a general monitoring pillar (see subsequent sections for more on monitoring and evaluation).

**Including coordination as a strategic priority in its own right increases its visibility and ensures greater prioritisation**, whereas treating as a cross-cutting function risks it being overlooked. It also provides a clearer basis for governments to allocate dedicated human and financial resources, clarifies institutional responsibilities and promotes shared ownership across implementing agencies.

By formally embedding coordination (and monitoring) mechanisms as a pillar in NAP WPS, governments also create stronger mandates and justification for systems that preserve knowledge over time. This can be especially relevant within ASEAN where staff turnover, secondments and rotation are common challenges. Integrating coordination mechanisms with reporting obligations also facilitates streamlined reporting to regional bodies (e.g. ASEAN RPA WPS) and international bodies (e.g. CEDAW, Beijing+25, UNSCR 1325 (2000) reporting) — ensuring that NAP WPS implementation data feeds into broader commitments.

### Box 10: The Philippines has a dedicated NAP Secretariat operating at the highest levels

The Philippines NAP WPS is their fourth iteration and has drawn on lessons learned from their previous three plans. The Philippines has institutionalized a multi-layered, whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to implementing and coordinating the NAP WPS 2023-2033. Their coordination mechanisms aim to ensure that implementation is effectively tracked and to encourage stakeholders to work together more collaboratively.

The Philippines has a dedicated Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU), the Chair of the National Steering Committee on WPS (NSCWPS) and acts as the NAPWPS Secretariat, in partnership with the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) and the Vice-Chair of the NSCWPS. This demonstrates the highest level of commitment to the WPS agenda and ensures that this work is intrinsically connected to Philippines' broader peace and security priorities.

There is a Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC), from January 2014, between the PCW and OPAPRU which articulates specific guidelines for integrating WPS into the country's existing national Gender and Development (GAD) Framework, in particular, within the GAD Planning and Budgeting framework. The NSCWPS also operates as an inter-agency committee with a mandate to "provide overall policy direction, as well as manage, coordinate, monitor, evaluate and report on the implementation of the NAP", as mandated by Executive Order 865 of 2010.

The NSCWPS is composed of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of National Defence, Department of Justice, Department of Social Welfare and Development, National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, PCW and OPAPRU. Executive Order 865 of 2010 is currently being amended to expand its membership, **aligning the Steering Committee with the country's future-proofing strategy to address emerging issues that will shape the WPS landscape over the next decade**. This also includes expanding the membership to include women CSOs.

**NAP coordination mechanisms increasingly include some form of high-level steering committee, often at the ministerial level, as well as representatives from CSOs.** Such steering committees or advisory groups usually provide strategic guidance and the ongoing political will that is required to ensure proper resourcing and provide political support for reforms. Any high-level steering committee is **typically supported by operational-level coordination mechanisms**, which may vary in structure and design. Increasingly, such technical working groups include a mix of government officials and CSO partners.

About 20 countries out of the 112 countries that have NAPs WPS have "co-leads", with 2-3 ministries in charge in order to ensure proper engagement by the key agencies. Depending on the complexity of the NAP, sub-working groups may be established and be made responsible for implementing specific work pillars or activities. Experience shows that these coordination groups

function best when guided by clear terms of reference outlining the roles and responsibilities of members, including the functioning of the chair or co-chairs.

Lessons learned indicate that **coordination groups are most effective when they focus on what is working, what is not, and how to collaborate concretely on specific initiatives – rather than simply providing routine activity updates**. In the modern age such coordination groups can also harness online knowledge-sharing tools and chat groups to regularly share information between meetings.

Knowledge management is particularly important because feedback at the NAP WPS Academies indicated that staff turnover often seriously undermines implementation, because people responsible for key activities leave and their knowledge is lost. Ensuring information is being regularly collected, shared and stored is important – ideally as part of the monitoring process – and that departing staff leave proper handover reports.

### Box 11: Timor-Leste includes civil society in their coordination and monitoring mechanisms

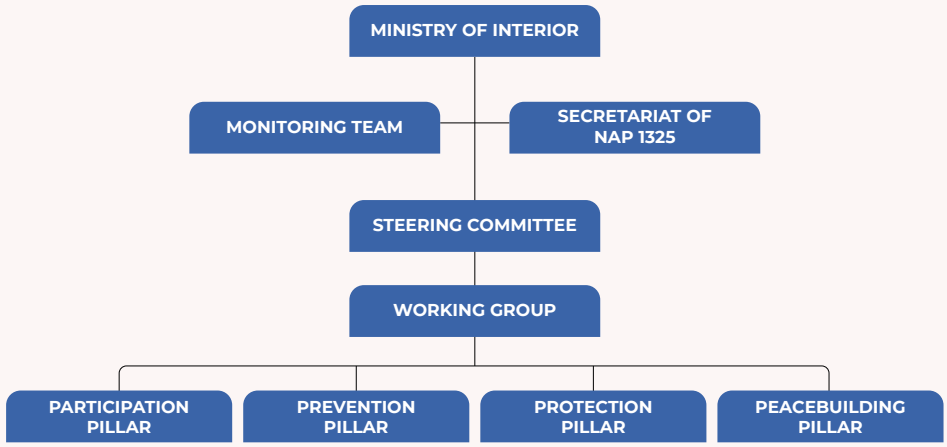
Timor-Leste adopted its first NAP WPS in 2016, and it expired in 2020. Their second NAP is currently under implementation, running from 2024 to 2028. Many lessons were learned from phase 1 of implementation, including on coordination. Their current NAP specifically responded to challenges identified during the phase 1 implementation by recommending the government:

> Create a multisectoral working group for the implementation and monitoring of the commitments on women, peace and security. The NAP 1325 Secretariat, along with the implementing structure of NAP 1325, must hold regular annual meetings with the officials from each line ministry to analyse the progress and challenges from the NAP 1325 implementation.
>
> There must be an endeavour to engage all stakeholders and influencers, including members from the media, religious communities, political and security sectors, UN agencies, humanitarian aid organizations, international donors, civil society for a multilateral and multisectoral dialogue on methods to mainstream and maximize participation of women in public and political affairs... In a natural progression of lessons from NAP 1325 (2000) (Phase I), a strong partnership between the government and CSOs has been identified as a best practice." [23]

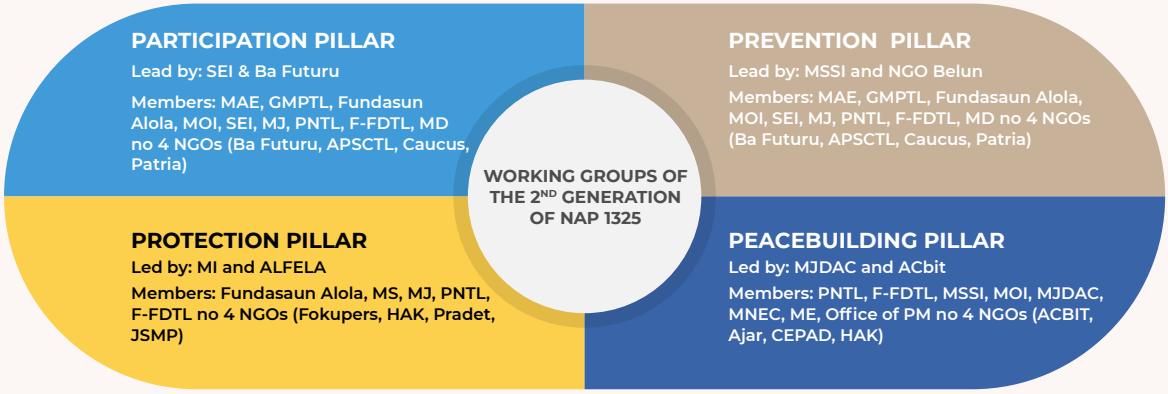
Timor-Leste's current NAP takes coordination very seriously, with an implementation structure that includes the Ministry of Interior (MOI) as the lead coordination agency. MOI operates as the NAP Secretariat, supporting a high-level Steering Committee (SC), with Working Groups for all four NAP pillars, as well as a Monitoring Team with support from a dedicated NAP 1325 Secretariat. The Steering Committee is composed of officials from Director

23 p. 6.

General levels from 11 ministries, executive directors from four CSOs and technical staff from development partners. It is chaired by a SC Coordinator who is a senior MOI official.




The four Working Groups are clustered around each of the implementation pillars, and have a government and CSO representative chairing as co-leads. They are responsible for identifying activities and then preparing detailed annual plans and budgets, which are sent to the SC for approval. They also produce annual reports based on inputs from line ministries, which are shared with the SC and the Monitoring Team (see section (g) for more on monitoring). The MOI's National Directorate for Prevention of Community Conflict serves as the official NAP Secretariat, with technical support from UN Women.



## F. IMPLEMENTING NATIONAL ACTION PLANS ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

The two NAP WPS Academies placed strong emphasis on the need to **design NAPs WPS in ways that enhance the likelihood of effective implementation**. However, it was repeatedly emphasized that the NAP itself is only the first step in a broader process aimed at achieving transformative change in people's lives, ultimately contributing to "positive peace"– societies characterized by social harmony and the capacity to manage conflict through peaceful means.

Once a NAP WPS is drafted and endorsed, a key step is to **ensuring that each agency with implementation responsibilities develops their own, more detailed, operational plans**. These will outline the specific actions each entity will take to achieve the results for which they are responsible.

The NAPs usually set out higher level goals and targets, with a results framework focused on tracking major changes. As such, they require operational plans to support them, as these provide greater detail on how the results will be achieved. These operational plans need detailed budgets, which then need to be submitted through the annual budget process. In Indonesia, for example, their NAP specifically requires "each ministry/agency to prepare its annual activity plan, according to its duties and functions, in coordination with the NAP WPS Working Group in Indonesia".[24]

### Box 12: Viet Nam's Ministry of Public Security is developing its internal WPS operational plans

While most NAPs WPS are launched with great fanfare, this is the first step in making a difference in the lives of women and girls. The NAP sets out the high-level framework for action, and should include a clear results framework aimed at clarifying what "success" will look like if the NAP is implemented fully. To achieve results however, a lesson learned shows that NAPs need to be supported by individual agency operational plans – at least for the most critical stakeholders – setting out their specific actions to implement their responsibilities in the NAP.

A good example is provided by Viet Nam, which endorsed its very first NAP in 2024. The development and drafting of their NAP WPS were carried out under Ministry of Foreign Affairs leadership, based on wide consultations with ministries and institutions at the central level, local authorities, women's organisations and with international partners. As the lead government agency on law and order, the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) is one of the key agencies with implementation responsibilities.

24 https://wps.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Permenko-PMK-5-Tahun-2021-ttg-RAN-P3AKS_English-Version.pdf

Since the NAP was launched, MPS has been taking proactive steps to implement its assigned responsibilities. These which include strengthening gender equality policies within the security sector, promoting women's leadership and participation in domestic and international security and law enforcement and in UN peacekeeping operations.[25] In February 2025 40 officials came together to "develop concrete actions, policies and strategic objectives to outline the draft action plan for MPS as a supporting plan for the NAP WPS 'Delivery Plan' by the government".[26]

This operational planning is crucial to focusing resources effectively for progress on NAP implementation. In March 2025 MPS also collaborated with UN Women to host an International Conference in Hanoi on "Strengthening Women's Participation in Law Enforcement in Viet Nam". This also provided a learning opportunity from other jurisdictions about how to implement concrete reforms to improve women's participation in the justice sector.[27]

In addition to developing WPS operational plans, it is absolutely essential that agencies also develop proper budgets to support their implementation activities. Across ASEAN, a number of countries are already engaging in gender-responsive budgeting, namely, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand.[28] These countries have very useful experience that could be shared with other AMS. Regardless of whether a country has adopted GRB principles, the critical point is that the NAP is not just a statement of purpose; **the NAP WPS must also be properly resourced** to ensure its implementation in practice.

This means that the **NAP should include an overall costing when it is submitted to the Cabinet or Parliament for endorsement**. However, as of early 2023, only 31 out of 101 NAPS included funding estimates for their WPS activities.[29] The government must have an idea of how much the NAP WPS will cost before approving it, but high-level figures will still need to be elaborated upon in annual budgets. WPS budgets are often embedded in individual ministry budgets, but a central NAP Secretariat may compile a "sector wide" budget to track spending and report on results.

25 https://wps.asean.org/stories/ministry-of-public-security-and-un-women-to-advance-the-implementation-of-vietnams-women-peace-and-security-national-action-plan/

26 Ibid.

27 https://wps.asean.org/news/empowering-vietnamese-policewomen-an-international-conference-on-strengthening-capacity-of-women-in-law-enforcement/

28 https://wps.asean.org/gender-responsive-budgeting-in-asean/#info

29 https://pcw.gov.ph/exploring-financing-gaps-and-strategies-discussed-on-international-conference-for-wps/

### Box 13: The Philippines NAP WPS specifically calls on agencies to integrate WPS budgets as part of their gender-responsive budgeting processes

The Philippines has long been implementing gender-responsive budgeting as part of its overall Gender and Development (GAD) policies. Since 1995 the Philippines has been implementing what it colloquially calls the 'Women's Budget' – technically the GAD Budget in the General Appropriations Act. The GAD Budget is a policy directing all government agencies to allocate a minimum of five per cent of their total annual budgets for gender programmes, projects and activities including those that align with the WPS Agenda. Complementing the GAD Budget, in 2009 the Philippines enacted what it calls the Magna Carta of Women, which explicitly calls on the Government to protect women during disasters, calamities and crises. It incorporates their welfare in peace agendas and recognizes their crucial role in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

The latest NAP WPS (2023-3033) highlights that the Joint Memorandum Circular from January 2014 between the PCW and OPAPRU articulates specific guidelines for integrating WPS into the existing national GAD Framework, particularly within GAD Planning and Budgeting. The JMC provides specific steps that agencies and subnational entities (i.e. local government units) playing a role in the NAP WPS implementation, must follow in preparing their respective GBPs related to WPS.

The NAP results framework also specifically includes an action point on gender budgeting for WPS, requiring the Government to "Develop and implement WPS policies and [programme, activities and projects] PAPs, within the GAD Agenda and GAD Code of National Government Agencies and [Local Government Units], as reflected in their annual GPBs [Gender Plans and Budgets] and GAD ARs [Accomplishment Reports]." In practice, this means that WPS issues must be recognized as an integral part of GAD and therefore incorporated into all GAD plans and budgets.

## G. MONITORING PROGRESS

Another key element supporting effective NAP WPS implementation is ensuring a strong monitoring system is in place which is able to track progress and to assist stakeholders in identifying when implementation is off-track so that changes can be made. Despite this, however, lessons learned from the last decades of NAP WPS implementation show that monitoring has tended to be weak. NAPs themselves have often not included proper results frameworks, while insufficient staffing and financial resources were allocated to ensure progress could be tracked in real time. Even where completion evaluations were undertaken to identify successes and failures, monitoring throughout the implementation process was much less common. Where it occurred, it was usually insufficiently resourced to gather proper data.

Experience from the numerous NAPs WPS developed over the last two decades underscores that it is important to design a strong results framework and outcomes-focused indicators at the outset, and to direct resources towards monitoring and results reporting throughout the NAP implementation process. Notably, results language may be different – results may be described as goals, objectives, outcomes, outputs or something else – but the key approach is to identify actual changes that are expected if all of the NAP activities are successfully implemented. Some countries are now investing in dedicated M&E Units, while others are using existing government data systems to include additional indicators on WPS issues that can harness existing data collection mechanisms.

### Box 14: Timor-Leste's NAP includes a clear logical framework to track results

Timor-Leste is currently implementing its second NAP WPS. It is one of only four countries in the world to have designed a high-impact NAP, which has a clear results framework and indicators. The main body of the NAP sets out the context and theory of change which underpins the NAP. The theory of change is the narrative statement which describes the logic underpinning the NAP's design. It reflects the assumptions on which the "success" of the NAP depends, and explains the connections between how the activities implemented will contribute to achieving actual results with a long-term impact in changing people's lives. The logical framework of results (known as the "logframe") sets out the more detailed set of outcomes (referred to in their NAP as the "goals"), outputs and activities, with indicators to track progress. Figure 4 below is an example of Timor-Leste's logframe, including the indicators that will guide monitoring.

*Figure 4: Snapshot from Timor-Leste's NAP logframe*

| Goal: Improving, Strengthening and Expanding equal and active participation of women in decision making process relating to governance, peace and security | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Output | Specific Activities | Performance Indicators | Implementation Year | | | | | Lead Institution |
| | | | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | |
| 1.1. Increased representation of women elected or appointed to roles in decision-making positions in the security and justice sectors at local and national levels. | 1.1.2. Undertake advocacy and lobbying to develop criteria for the promotion of gender equality as a pre-requisite for the appointment of women to governance, senior positions and community leaderships. | # and % of Women participating in the leadership training in the national and the Suco levels.<br><br># and % of Women elected for senior positions in the local and national governance increased: | x | x | x | x | x | SEI, MAE & CSOs |

| Goal: Improving, Strengthening and Expanding equal and active participation of women in decision making process relating to governance, peace and security | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Output | Specific Activities | Performance Indicators | Implementation Year | | | | | Lead Institution |
| | | | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | |
| | 1.1.2. Undertake advocacy and lobbying to develop criteria for the promotion of gender equality as a pre-requisite for the appointment of women to governance, senior positions and community leaderships. | • Aldeia Chief<br>• Suco Chief<br>• Administrative Post<br>• Municipality<br># and % of Women elected to parliament maintained or increased.<br># and % of Women in senior positions increased in the public institutions. | | | | | | SEI, MAE & CSOs |
| | 1.1.3. Develop standard and integrated training modules for promotion of women participation in elections for local and national governance. | # and % reached for civic education related to women political participation. | x | x | x | x | x | SEI, MAE & CSOs |
| 1.2. Laws, Policies and Programs regarding peace and security are developed with maximum participation from various groups of women and men, and promote gender equality | 1.2.1. Develop the capacity of the Government institutions to integrate WPS agenda in legislation, policies, and programs including members of parliament and male and female ministry officials. | # and % of ministries/ institutions laws, policies and plans integrated gender perspective. | | x | x | x | x | MJ |

While Timor-Leste included a detailed results framework as an annex to its NAP WPS, many other NAPs have been drafted to present higher-level goals, but lacked specific indicators to measure success. While goals provide a useful starting point, experience shows that NAP **implementation improves where clear indicators and targets are in place** to help teams track progress over time. These indicators may be qualitative or quantitative. They will often be shaped by the existing data collection or monitoring systems being used.

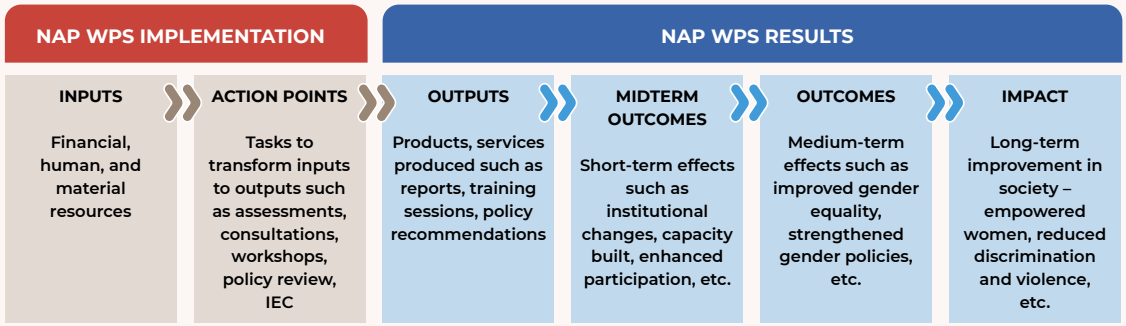
## Box 15: The Philippines developed a comprehensive WPS Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEAL) Handbook

The Philippines is currently implementing the fourth NAP WPS, which runs from 2023 to 2033. The NAP's strong commitment to results is reflected in Pillar 4 which focuses on "Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning" (MEAL). This pillar specifically recognizes that monitoring was identified as a key weakness of the NAP WPS (2017-2022). Since then, a shift toward developing a more comprehensive MEAL system has occurred, which transcends traditional M&E approaches by adopting a more holistic approach to accountability and learning. An evaluation of the previous NAP found that WPS was insufficiently integrated into GPBs and that the PCW's Gender Mainstreaming and Monitoring System did not effectively track NAP WPS specific initiatives within GAD submissions.[30] It was recommended that they introduce an additional feature enabling the tracking of WPS-specific entries within the GMMS and improve local-level monitoring systems for WPS.

The **shift to MEAL in the fourth NAP WPS reflects an understanding that M&E is insufficient to capture the complexity and impact of WPS interventions**, particularly now that the Philippines has given their NAP WPS a 10-year implementation timeline. The NAP WPS envisaged the establishment of a dedicated Technical Working Group comprised of representatives from government agencies, NGOs and other key stakeholders to guide this work. An Ad-hoc MEAL Committee was also set up, its technical experts providing guidance on the M&E plan's finalisation.

The new approach to MEAL recognized that "the inclusion of CSOs is instrumental to enhancing effectiveness and ensuring a more inclusive and participatory approach". Notably, the NAP was launched in 2023 and in 2024 the OPAPRU launched a companion *NAP WPS MEAL Indicators Handbook*,[31] which drew on existing GAD mechanisms, indicators and data to clarify the final MEAL Framework for WPS. Developed with UN Women technical support, the Handbook anticipated that the PCW would reconfigure their existing Gender Mainstreaming and Monitoring System to track the WPS indicators.

*Figure 5: Results chain of the Philippines NAP WPS from the MEAL Indicators Handbook*




30 p. 13.

31 https://peace.gov.ph/national-action-plan-women-peace-security/