PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERPIN GOOD PRACTICE IN NAP MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING FRAMEWORKS

ISSUE PAPER

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women &
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security

The Australian Civil Society Coalition for WPS

The Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security is a non-partisan and independent coalition of civil society organisations, networks and individuals working to advance the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda in Australia, Asia and the Pacific region and globally.

Our vision is a world in which gender equality, and the contributions and rights of diverse women and girls, are at the forefront of transforming conflict to build peace.

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Issue Papers

The Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women Peace and Security commissioned the writing of thematically focused Issue Papers to inform the development of Australia's second National Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2nd NAP) and to advance the discussion on women, peace and security in Australia. These Issue Papers build on key themes outlined in "*Listening to Women's Voice and Making the Connections to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: Fifth Report of the Annual Civil Society Dialogue on Women, Peace and Security*."

Issue Paper Contributors

The Australian WPS Coalition thanks Barbara K Trojanowska for her contribution.

Dr Barbara K Trojanowska completed her PhD at Monash University's Research Centre for Gender, Peace and Security. Her research focuses on the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and its implementation through national and regional action plans in Asia and the Pacific. Barbara is the coordinator of the WILPF Academic Network and a steering member of the Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security.

Principles that underpin good practice in NAP monitoring, evaluation accountability and learning frameworks

The impact of National Action Plans (NAPs) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) needs to be monitored, rigorously measured, reviewed and reported in a transparent manner. The Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 noted that "[f]or NAPs to show concrete results in the lives of women, girls and their communities, their actual impact should be systematically monitored and regularly assessed."[1] The effective implementation of Australia's WPS policy and the accountability of the Australian Government to UNSCR 1325 is ultimately contingent on the development of an adequate monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) system.

The input-based framework is considered the major weakness of the current Australian NAP. The 2015 Interim Review symptomatically clustered as many as five of 16 recommendations for action by the Australian Government under the theme of monitoring and evaluation.[2] The Fourth Annual Civil Society Report Card on Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security similarly called the current framework "the single biggest failing of the first NAP."[3]

It is important to note that this weakness is not limited to the Australian NAP but is relatively common for WPS policies released globally.[4] Countries such as the UK and Canada took steps to overcome this problem in later generations of their NAPs.[5] Given the Australian Government's commitment to the WPS agenda and involvement in lessons-learned processes, the second Australian NAP will be also well-positioned to address earlier shortcomings in this regard.

Our Vision

The collective vision of the Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security is a world in which gender equality, and the contributions and rights of diverse women and girls are at the forefront of transforming conflict to build peace. In short, our vision is for Australia's second NAP to be a policy that matters, has real-life implications and provides tools to account for this impact.

For this to happen, Australia's WPS policy must be assisted by a specific, outcome-based MEAL framework that will be able to yield results and produce a tangible impact upon the lives of conflict-affected women and girls, in Australia and overseas.

What Does This Mean for Australia's Next NAP?

The second Australian NAP offers the opportunity to move from the limitations of the current policy towards a well-designed outcome-based framework. For a MEAL framework to be robust and impactful, it needs to be able to do the following: (1) track the progress in implementing the NAP (*monitoring*); (2) measure (quantitatively and qualitatively) the effectiveness of this implementation

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[1] Radhika Coomaraswamy, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325* (New York: UN Women, 2015), 248.
[2] Humanitarian Advisory Group, Independent Interim Review of the Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (Melbourne: Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2015), 10.
[3] Hannah Jay, Luke Johnson, Katrina Lee-Koo and Barbara K. Trojanowska, 2016 Fourth Annual Civil Society Report Card of Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (Canberra: Monash GPS, 2017), 27.
[4] Barbara Miller, Milad Pournik and Aisling Swaine, Women in Peace and Security through United Nations Security Resolution 1325: Literature Review, Content Analysis of National Action Plans, and Implementation (Washington, D.C: The George Washington University, 2014).
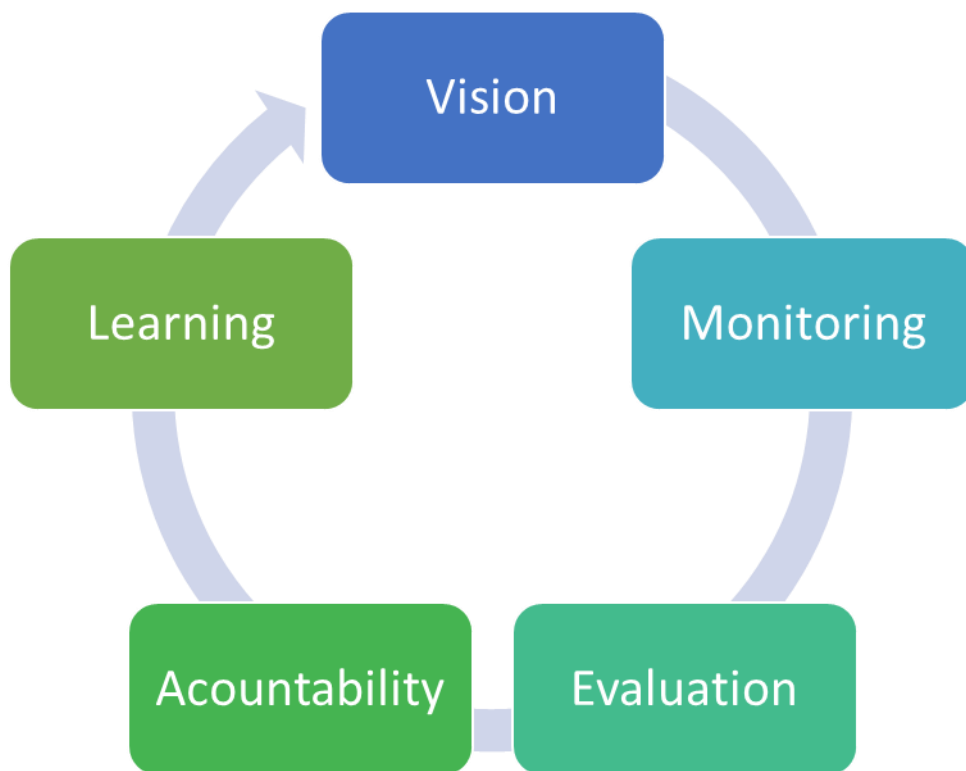[5] For more, see: Barbara K. Trojanowska, Katrina Lee-Koo and Luke Johnson, National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security: Eight Countries in Focus (Canberra: Australian Civil Military Centre, 2018), 55-61.

(*evaluation*); (3) account for the progress and impact – or lack thereof (*accountability*); and (4) engage in a continuous lessons-learned process through a reflection upon how the performance can be improved (*learning*).

In all of this, it is crucial for the MEAL system to be tied to the overarching vision of Australia's second NAP. In this Issue Paper series, Lee-Koo and O'Dwyer suggested that the following vision should drive the second NAP development:

> *Australia's commitment to the women, peace and security agenda is founded on promoting gender equality to achieve sustainable peace through enabling the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, girls and other marginalised gender identities in all activities that prevent conflict, transition communities out of conflict, and address human insecurity.*[6]

This vision (or a subsequent one) should be the point of departure and reference for the design of a MEAL framework, at every stage.

Monitoring and evaluation

An impactful NAP requires the development of specific action points assigned to the implementing actors. The role of a MEAL framework is to, firstly, put in place a tracking system that corresponds with these *activities* and their *outputs*; and secondly, design tools that will allow assessing the *outcomes* and *impact* of these activities against the NAP's vision and goals.

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[6] Katrina Lee Koo and Barbara O'Dwyer, Issue Paper: Developing a Vision for the Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (Canberra: Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security, 2018), 3.

Impact	**is the long-term societal change**
Outcomes	**are the results of activities and outputs**
Outputs	**are the deliverables of activities**
Activities	**are concrete actions**

Put simply, a robust MEAL framework must be well-placed to address the following questions:

1. Are we doing what we said we would do?

2. Are we achieving the goals we want to achieve?

Indicators (i.e. specific statements that illustrate progress) provide such tools to both track and measure NAP implementation. The 2010 Secretary-General's Report on Women, Peace and Security outlined key principles for WPS indicators, with the following recommendations applying to NAPs:

(a) Indicators must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound;

(b) Indicators should be gender-sensitive, and include both qualitative and quantitative features, so as to be capable of tracking changes at the local, national, regional and international levels (…);

(d) The indicators would be developed through a consultative process and would draw from a mapping exercise of existing indicators. New indicators would be developed where gaps in monitoring and data collection were identified.[7]

Indictors that follow the SMART system (i.e. are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) have to be developed in an inclusive process. Such a consultative process ensures the relevance of these indicators to the lived-experiences of conflict-affected women in their respective communities.

The most common weakness of the existing NAPs, including Australia's first NAP, is overreliance on quantitative indicators (i.e. measures that count the number, ratio, percentage or frequency). While these measurements track the implementation of *activities* and related *outputs* (such as a policy, a program or a service), they do not measure their *outcomes* and *impact*.[8] Hence, robust, qualitative indicators need to assist quantitative measures so as to be able to assess the results of NAP implementation. Such qualitative indicators reflect upon the perception, attitudes or a degree of effectiveness. They measure the quality of actions undertaken within the NAP.

In addition to the combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators, baseline data is necessary to measure the impact of any policy. The NAP progress reports compiled by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) provide an important source of such data. Yet, given the limited attention to outcomes and impact in these reports, alone they are insufficient to establish the baseline for the second NAP. Thus, the second NAP should address these data gaps – either through gathering the missing data beforehand or through designing specific action points on data collection to be undertaken as part of the implementation of the second NAP.

Finally, clearly established targets, benchmarks and timelines help match short-term operational goals with the long-term vision. Such targets outline the specific objectives to be achieved within a

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[7] Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security, S/2010/173, 6 April 2010, 2.
[8] Zsuzsanna Lippai and Angelic Young, Creating National Action Plans: a Guide To Implementing Resolution 1325 (Washington D.C: Inclusive Security, 2017).

given timeframe. They provide the course of action for the NAP, ensuring that its implementation remains on the right track.

Accountability and Learning

Accountability and learning are the other necessary elements of a MEAL system. Not only do they ensure that activities are leading to certain outputs, outcomes and impact but also that the process is inclusive, efficient, sustainable and responsive to constrains or barriers that might arise in the implementation. A robust MEAL framework for the second NAP needs to address two subsequent questions:

1. Is our performance efficient, sustainable and responsive?

2. How can we learn from and improve our performance?

A periodic reporting, ideally supported by independent external evaluations or review processes, provides a basis for accountability for the NAP. The current Australian NAP established such a reporting mechanism. It consists of three progress reports compiled by the PM&C and tabled in Parliament, as well as two independent reviews conducted by appointed experts.

While regular and transparent reporting is crucial, it must also be feasible. The extensive and under-resourced reporting around the first Australian NAP might have inadvertently contributed to sacrificing the quality of it. Both the 2014 and 2017 progress reports are overwhelmingly focused on activities and outputs, with only limited reflection being placed upon outcomes and impact. Furthermore, independent experts should be nominated in a more transparent process in consultation with Australian civil society.

Finally, the MEAL system needs to be flexible to address NAP implementation in a specific environment, so that both intended and unintended consequences of certain activities and outputs can be captured. In doing so, MEAL allows the implementers to learn throughout the process and make appropriate adjustments. It also supports the improvement of the NAP as a whole, its outcomes and overall impact.

Recommendations

The Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security recommends that the Australian Government should:

- Resource the development and operationalisation of the MEAL system for the lifespan of the second NAP;

- Ensure the entire MEAL system is closely tied to the overarching vision and goals of the second NAP;

- Consult civil society (both in Australia and in our region) and consolidate their views to determine the focus and relevance of indicators and targets;

- Clearly define targets/benchmarks and associated timeframes;

- Design a feasible and flexible reporting mechanism that is comprised of both internal and external review processes;

- Train the government departments and agencies on data collection and reporting; and

- Involve independent, external monitoring and evaluation specialist(s) to refine the MEAL framework and provide advice as need throughout the lifespan of the second NAP.

- The current Australian NAP aptly notes that "[t]he implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda is a long-term and transformative piece of work."[9] A robust MEAL framework will help Australia live up to this challenge and design a policy that matters.

Want to know more?

Lee-Koo, K. (2016). Engaging UNSCR 1325 through Australia's National Action Plan. International Political Science Review, 37(3), 336–349.

Lippai, Z., & Young, A. (2017). Creating National Action Plans: a Guide To Implementing Resolution 1325. Washington, D.C.: Inclusive Security.

Miller, B., Pournik, M., & Swaine, A. (2014). Women in Peace and Security through United Nations Security Resolution 1325: Literature Review, Content Analysis of National Action Plans, and Implementation. Washington, D.C.: The George Washington University.

Trojanowska, B. K., Lee-Koo, K., & Johnson, L. (2018). National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security: Eight Countries in Focus. Canberra: Australian Civil Military Centre.

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[9] Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (Canberra: Australian Government, 2012), 15.