

**STRENGTHENING CONFLICT PREVENTION
IN AUSTRALIA'S SECOND NATIONAL ACTION PLAN
ON WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY**

ISSUE PAPER

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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

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Strengthening conflict prevention in Australia's second National Action Plan (NAP) on women, peace and security

Australia's first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012-18) takes a whole of government approach to integrating a gender perspective into peace and security policies. In fulfilling the commitment to implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the strategies outlined in first NAP on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) align with the four thematic areas (also called pillars) of the WPS agenda. These pillars are **preventing** conflict, ensuring the meaningful **participation** of women across all levels of decision-making related to peace and security policies, **protecting** the rights of women and girls (including protection from gender-based violence), and addressing the needs of women and girls in all **relief and recovery** efforts.

As we approach the development of the second NAP, this issue paper assesses the conceptualisation of conflict prevention pillar in the first NAP and provides recommendations on developing a more robust approach to conflict prevention. The second Australian NAP is an opportunity to address conflict prevention in a substantial and meaningful manner such that it strengthens Australia's commitments to the WPS agenda. A broader conceptualisation of prevention across three dimensions – direct, structural and systemic – is the basis for recommendations made in this issue paper.

Importance of conflict prevention

Elimination of war as a means to resolve national and international disputes is a cornerstone of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Women's movements emphasise negotiation, equal representation and institution-building as vital for sustainable peace by linking conflict prevention to demilitarisation, addressing human insecurity, and the fulfilment of human rights. The UN Women's *Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325* notes:

“Effective conflict prevention must, therefore, start from an understanding of the broad and deep insecurities that permeate women's lives prior to conflict, and the ways that pre-conflict structural inequality can facilitate violence and insecurity.” (UN Women, 2015, p. 207)

Recent UN [Security Council](#) and [General Assembly](#) resolutions (2282 and 70/262 respectively) also emphasise the importance of:

“...activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development”.

Reviews of conflict prevention highlight the (a) primacy of politics (i.e., the need for political solutions and diplomacy rather than attempting to achieve peace through military and technical engagements); (b) need for immediate short-term preventive measures; and (c) need to invest in measures that address the root causes and structural drivers of conflict.¹

¹ See *Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people* ([A/70/95-S/2015/446](#)); UN General Assembly [A/70/357](#) and UN Security Council [S/2015/682](#), and UN General Assembly Resolution [A/70/709](#).

Conflict prevention continues to be under-emphasised

Despite the above recognition that sustainable peace requires a holistic approach to conflict prevention, global responses to security lean towards greater militarisation. In 2017 global military spending amounted to USD\$1.7 trillion, the highest since the end of the Cold War (SIPRI, 2018). WILPF's WPS [Scorecard](#), which tracks the gaps between commitments and achievements of the four pillars of the WPS agenda by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, shows that prevention pillar ranks the lowest when compared to the other seven category measures (2017).

The first Australian NAP also under-emphasises conflict prevention, despite its identification as one of five thematic areas. The Humanitarian Advisory Group's Interim Independent Review (IIR) of the NAP (2015) highlights that conflict prevention, and a gendered analysis of conflict is subordinated to a focus on protection and sexual and gender-based violence.

The first NAP's approach to categorising actions by strategy rather than by thematic areas presents broad strategies and misses the opportunity to establish specific indicators to measure progress in preventing conflict, as well as providing a clear implementation framework (figure 1).

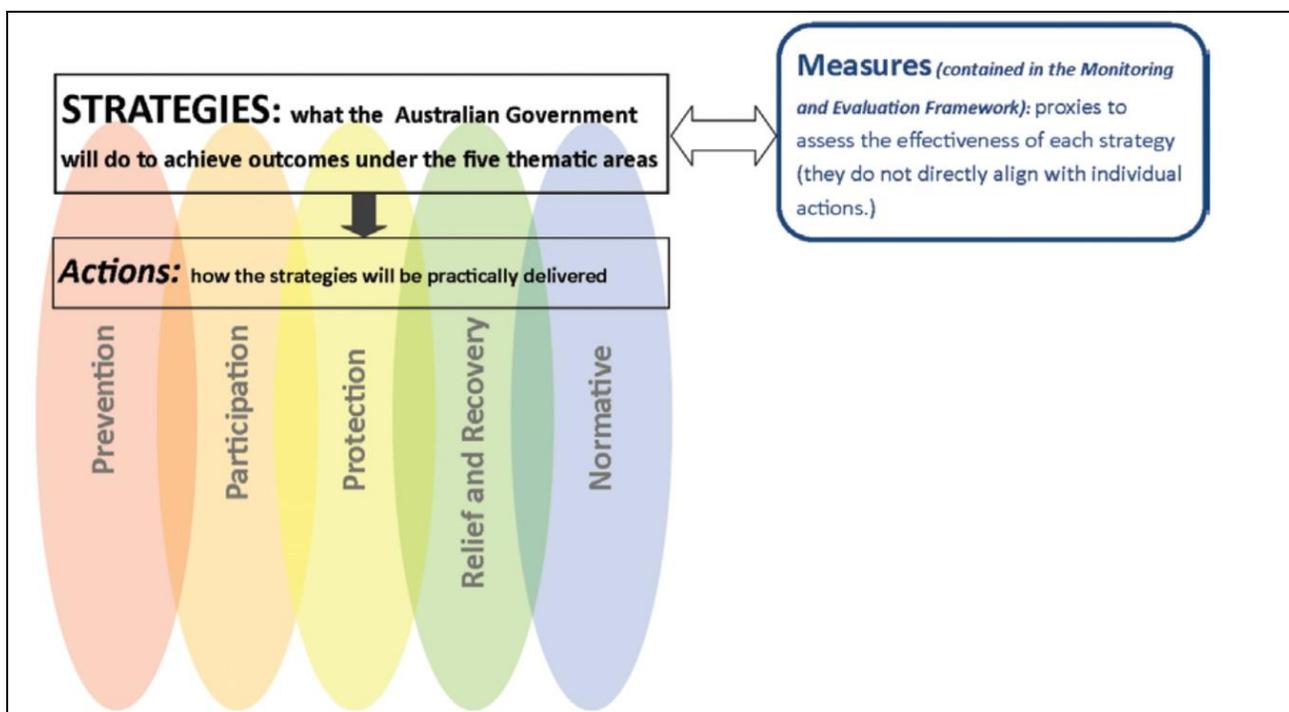


Figure 1: Australia National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security - the relationship between thematic areas, strategies, actions and measures (pg.20).

As Soumita Basu and Laura J Shepherd (2018) point out “only four out of a total of 49 actions, relate to prevention, and one of these four describes training for military, civilian and police personnel ‘to enhance staff competence’.” The remaining three relate to capacity development and supporting women’s leadership. However, it is heartening to see that conflict prevention in the current Australian NAP is linked to the participation pillar (see Canada, US and Liberia’s NAPs as examples), rather than exclusively to the prevention of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence (the protection pillar, see Ireland and UK’s Third NAP as examples).

Moreover, given its focus on Australia’s engagement overseas, the current Australian NAP takes an *external* view of the WPS agenda, particularly on aspects of conflict prevention. Australia could do more to connect the goals in the NAP with the domestic context. For example, in its 2017 [report](#), the Australian WPS Coalition noted the NAP was conspicuously silent on Australia’s own violent colonial past, domestic challenges to social inclusion, and “the unfinished work on reconciliation.” (p.

38) It also noted that Australia could harness the strengths of our multicultural society towards conflict prevention. The IIR also notes the contribution that diaspora communities could be making in the WPS and NAP processes (2015, p.55).

Strengthening conflict prevention in Australia's second NAP

The vision of the [Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women Peace and Security](#) reflects the key tenets of the WPS agenda: "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."

Thus, for the Australian WPS Coalition, the concept of prevention is (a) more than just the prevention of conflict-related sexual, and gender-based violence and (b) includes domestic, regional and international spheres of action that take place during times of peace and times of conflict.

The WPS Coalition's concept of prevention draws on a wider definition of prevention, based on a gender-inclusive human security approach to peace and security policy across three dimensions: direct, structural and systemic prevention (see diagram below).

Direct prevention is featured because it refers to immediate efforts to reduce violence and de-escalate the conflict. Its focus is on women's leadership and meaningful participation in mediation, dialogue, confidence-building measures, peace zones, preventive diplomacy and humanitarian assistance. **Structural** prevention addresses root causes of conflict (human insecurity, effective governance and the rule of law, cultures of peace, education, and the inclusion of women beyond direct conflict prevention). **Systemic** prevention is about assessing and addressing global risks of conflict and integrating global solutions and partnerships by critically appraising policy decisions that may impact violence that transcends borders (arms, drugs, trafficking, and displacement).

Across all preventive categories, a gender-informed approach guides ways to address the inter-related issues that destabilise societies from the top-down to the bottom up. Ideas about masculinity, family structures, governance and justice, access to resources, environmental and climate change impact, health and education, all intersect across these domains at the domestic, regional and international level. Here the NAP can make those links more solid through a whole of government approach, ensuring coherence of WPS agenda with other policy areas, and attention to conflict prevention at the domestic level as related to regional and international efforts for peace and security.

Further, effective conflict prevention requires a collaborative effort involving individuals, civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations working with and alongside State and International organisations. In particular, women have a major role to play in a range of preventive measures and initiatives, but these remain 'under the radar'. Therefore, prevention of conflict must involve diverse women's rights movements and organisations as active and visible agents of change and in doing so recognise that the obstacles to gender equality and women's rights have an intersectional dimension.

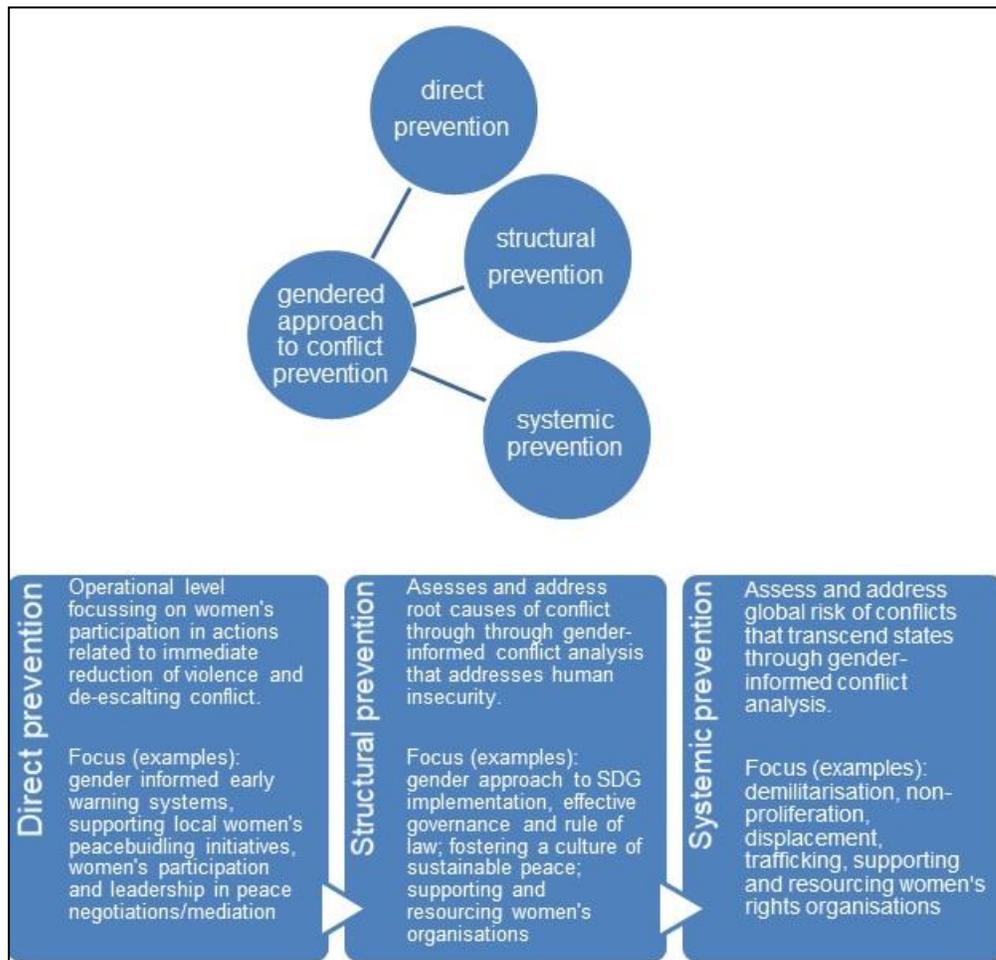


Figure 2: Adapted from Erik Melander and Claire Pigache, 2007, *Conflict Prevention: Concepts and Challenges* (pg.13-14).

Recommendations

The WPS Coalition believes that conflict prevention should be a stronger focus in the second NAP. To strengthen the conflict prevention pillar, the Australian Government must:

- **Consider and incorporate key recommendations made in the *Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325*.** In particular, these are to: adopt a human security approach to peace and security policies, focusing on reducing military expenditures and controlling the availability of armaments; promoting non-violent forms of conflict resolution; fostering a culture of peace; and resourcing and supporting women's rights organizations and women's human rights defenders with the aim of enabling women's leadership and meaningful participation in all dimensions of conflict prevention.
- Recognise that prevention applies not just at the point where conflict emerges, or during ongoing conflicts, but is more anticipatory across a range of issues that contribute to violent conflict both globally and domestically involving addressing conditions that lead to conflict. **The NAP must adopt the wider conceptualisation of conflict prevention (presented in this is paper) in its vision, goal, strategies and actions.**
- Adopt a **dual approach to conflict prevention:**
 - prevention of conflict is included as a Thematic Area (focusing on both national and international contexts and underpinned by direct preventative actions, structural

preventative actions and systemic preventive actions) with associated indicators to measure progress

- increased focus and attention is given to prevention aspects *across* the thematic areas (e.g. preventing sexual and gender-based violence by prosecuting perpetrators as well as investing in changing attitudes/beliefs that perpetuate gender inequality; supporting and resourcing the work of women's rights organisations; gendered approach to disaster risk reduction; supporting women-led efforts in preventing violent extremism.)
- Continue and further enhance the engagement of women across all dimensions of conflict prevention by resourcing and supporting initiatives to return a stronger focus to preventive efforts as part of the WPS agenda. Mandate that a greater proportion (at least 50%) of Australia's contribution to the Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund is directed towards women-led efforts in conflict prevention.
- Reexamine the establishment of a [Peace and Non-Violence Commission](#) to be tasked with the development of policies to promote national and international conflict prevention, non-violent intervention, mediation and peaceful resolution of conflict. The Commission must also be resourced to establish a National Women's Peace Fund for women-led initiatives on reconciliation, peace education in schools and in building social cohesion and inclusion within Australia.
- Embed the principles of peace and equality in all bilateral and multilateral agreements – with a greater focus on diplomacy as a mechanism for conflict prevention and resolution, disarmament (including nuclear disarmament), strengthening the focus of regional bodies (e.g. ASEAN/SAARC) on human security and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and implementation of collective responses to climate change. Towards this effort pass legislation prohibiting the export of arms to countries where civilians are harmed; mandate a gender impact analysis to be undertaken before arms trade agreements are signed, and require arms-producing corporations to monitor and report on the use of their arms in violence against women.

Want to know more?

Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women Peace and Security (2018) Listening to Women's Voices and Making the Connections to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: Fifth Report of the Annual Civil Society Dialogue On Women, Peace and Security. <https://tinyurl.com/ydbljyt5>

Soumita Basu & Laura J. Shepherd (2018) 'Prevention in pieces: representing conflict in the Women, Peace and Security agenda', Global Affairs, DOI: 10.1080/23340460.2017.1415723

Humanitarian Advisory Group (2015) Independent Interim Review of the Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012-2018. Final Report 30 October 2015. <https://tinyurl.com/ybxprtx7>

Erik Melander and Claire Pigache (2007) 'Conflict Prevention: Concepts and Challenges', in Walter Feichtinger & Predrag Jurekovi (eds) Konfliktprävention zwischen Anspruch und Wirklichkeit. Akademiedruckerei LVAK. Pp. 9-18. <https://tinyurl.com/ydfajvm>

SIPRI (2018) 'Global military spending remains high at \$1.7 trillion', 2 May <https://tinyurl.com/y8c8lceo>

United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/262, Review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, A/RES/70/262 (12 May 2016) <https://tinyurl.com/y7vx8jek>

United Nations Security Council resolution 2282 [on post-conflict peace building], S/RES/2282/2016 (27 April 2016) <https://tinyurl.com/yb8ox6rn>

United Nations Security Council, UN General Assembly, Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people, A/70/95–S/2015/446 (17 June 2015) <https://tinyurl.com/y9qxz9hk>

United Nations Security Council, UN General Assembly, The future of United Nations peace operations: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations. Report of the Secretary-General, A/70/357–S/2015/682 (2 September 2015) <https://tinyurl.com/y7rr6s9r>

United Nations General Assembly, Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism; report for the World Humanitarian Summit, A/70/709, (2 February 2016) <https://tinyurl.com/yd3wdwcc>

UN Women (2015) Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325. <https://tinyurl.com/yaapyneq>

WILPF (2017) WPS Scorecard. Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda by the UN Security Council Permanent Members. <https://tinyurl.com/yddxdxsx>

Prevention mapped to UNSCRs

	UNSCR 1325 (2000)	UNSCR 1820 (2008)	UNSCR 1888 (2009)	UNSCR 1889 (2009)	UNSCR 1960 (2010)	UNSCR 2106 (2013)	UNSCR 2122 (2013)	UNSCR 2242 (2015)
Supporting women's peace initiatives and conflict resolution processes	Light Blue							
Zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse		Dark Blue	Light Blue		Light Blue	Dark Blue		
Investigating and prosecuting acts of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes	Light Blue	Dark Blue				Dark Blue	Light Blue	Dark Blue
Protecting the human rights of women and girls; respecting international law	Light Blue			Dark Blue			Light Blue	Dark Blue
Resourcing of the women, peace and security agenda into Member States strategic plans								Dark Blue
Capacity-building for implementing women, peace and security resolutions								Dark Blue
More aid in conflict and post-conflict situations and tracking ODA's focus on gender								Dark Blue
Mainstreaming responses to sexual violence in peacebuilding, peacekeeping and peace negotiations								
Monitoring implementation of women peace and security; developing indicators to track implementation of UNSCR 1325			Light Blue	Dark Blue				
Regular briefings to UNSC on issues of relevance to women, peace and security; mainstreaming women peace and security in UNSC concerns across country-specific situations							Light Blue	
Inclusion of gender analysis and technical gender expertise in UN mission planning, mandate development, implementation, review, mission drawdown, and UN sanctions committees								Dark Blue
Evidence-based policy and responses on CVE and CT based on gendered drivers women's radicalisation, and impacts of CVE and CT strategies on women's human rights and women's organizations								Dark Blue

Prevention: supporting women's peace initiatives and conflict resolution processes; strengthening women's rights under national law; improving intervention strategies in the prevention of violence against women, including by prosecuting those responsible for violations of international law; and monitoring progress and ensuring accountability to the women peace and security commitments.

Prevention mapped to Beijing, CEDAW, WHS & SDGs

