CSCAP Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Study Group Meeting
Survey Response Summary Report

In June 2021, members of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) came together for the inaugural CSCAP Study Group on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The two-day virtual session was co-chaired by CSCAP Indonesia, CSCAP New Zealand, and USCSCAP. The discussion served as an opportunity for CSCAP member committees to reflect on common areas of progress and shared challenges in realizing WPS objectives. The Pacific Forum (USCSCAP) created a survey in conjunction with the study group to capture the current status of WPS implementation in the Asia-Pacific region.

The WPS agenda, which was formally recognized through the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) in October 2000, provides a policy framework for achieving equitable peace and advancing women's rights. The agenda rests on four interlinked pillars: participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery. *Participation* calls for enhancing women's participation across the entire spectrum of peace and security; *protection* calls for protecting women and girls from conflict generally, and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in particular;[1] *prevention* calls for preventing armed conflict and SGBV by strengthening national and international legal mechanisms, and recognizing the important role that women play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts; and *relief and recovery* calls for applying a gendered lens to the design and execution of humanitarian assistance.

Survey responses are summarized below.

      I.   **Survey Responses: Overview**

Complete responses were submitted by CSCAP member committees and academics from Australia, Canada, the European Union, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United States. Of these, Australia, Canada, the EU, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, and the US have all adopted WPS National Action Plans (NAPs) or Regional Action Plans (RAPs) – national or

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[1] Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) refers to any act that is perpetrated against a person's will and is based on gender norms and unequal power relationships. It includes physical, emotional or psychological and sexual violence, and denial of resources or access to services
(https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/60283/sexual-and-gender-based-violence-sgbv-prevention-and-response).

regional policy documents that contain directives for implementing the WPS agenda at the country and regional levels. Singapore is yet to introduce a WPS NAP.

Responses by Region
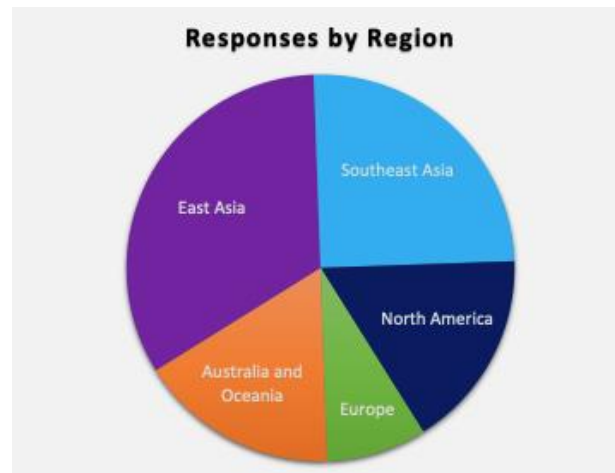
II.   National Action Plans (NAPs)

Stage of Implementation: Australia, Canada, and Japan are currently implementing second-generation NAPs, which build on the gains made under previous NAPs and address their limitations. The EU and the US have adopted multiple RAPs / NAPs and WPS policy frameworks. Indonesia is set to introduce its second NAP this year (2021), with its initial plan spanning 2014-2019.

Impact and Implementation of Current NAPs: The survey asked respondents to assess the impact of current NAPs. Answers to this question revealed some common areas of progress:

1. *Increased participation*: Existing NAPs are believed to have strengthened women's participation in leadership structures and the security sector. Indonesia's NAP is thought to have advanced women's involvement in decision-making processes, while Japan's plan was credited with bolstering women's participation in disaster response planning. Respondents from Japan and New Zealand noted that the proportion of women in national security institutions and UN peacekeeping operations has increased under current NAPs. Finally, since adopting its first action plan in 2011, the US has channelled efforts toward training women worldwide to engage in a broad pool of security sector roles.
2. *Responding to violence against women (VAW)*: Most respondents viewed NAPs as valuable instruments for safeguarding women and girls from violence, particularly where their provisions have been implemented by civil society organizations (CSOs) at the local level. Plans adopted by Japan and Indonesia have supported CSOs in responding to survivors of SGBV and enabled these organizations to form anti-VAW networks.

3. *Justice and Reconciliation*: RAPs / NAPs introduced by the EU and Canada have called attention to the importance of gender-mainstreaming in transitional justice and reconciliation processes. Indonesia's NAP was praised for ensuring the continuous implementation of justice and reconciliation initiatives.

Limitations: The survey asked respondents to consider possible limitations of current NAPs. Responses revealed common shortcomings, with shared areas for improvement:

1. *Improve monitoring and evaluation (M&E)*: Many respondents described NAP monitoring and evaluation processes as inadequate, with one individual calling for the use of SMART[2] indicators to improve M&E practices.
2. *Address funding constraints*: Several responses cited resource constraints and insufficient budget allocation as hindering the implementation of existing NAPs.
3. *Move beyond the numbers*: A number of responses revealed that existing NAPs prioritize increasing the number of women in security institutions rather than diversifying the roles available to them. Several respondents suggested that for NAPs to engender substantive change, they must support women's entry into positions of military leadership and encourage security institutions to adopt gender mainstreaming.
4. *Improve cross-sectoral coordination*: Several respondents spoke about the need for greater coordination between governments and CSOs in designing, implementing, and monitoring NAPs. One respondent argued that governments should construct cross-sectoral dialogues, allowing for a meaningful exchange of ideas with CSOs "in a way that would better center the lived experiences and expertise of women."
5. *Avoid counter-productive gender stereotypes*: Several respondents criticized existing NAPs for relying on gender stereotypes, some of which have overemphasized women's status as victims, disregarding their agency in matters related to peace and security. Another respondent stressed that NAPs must avoid viewing women as "agents for peace," as this perception also stems from gendered assumptions and overlooks the diverse nature of women's motives, identities, and experiences.
6. *Adopt an intersectional approach*: NAPs developed by Canada and the US were recognized as being limited in adopting an intersectional approach which accounts for how aspects of identity such as ethnicity, race, class, and sexual orientation *intersect* with gender to exacerbate inequality.
7. *Address domestic issues*: Respondents discussed how NAPs adopted by Canada, New Zealand, and the US have failed to engage with a range of domestic issues. CSOs in Canada and New Zealand have urged their governments to ensure that future NAPs address the gender-specific challenges that indigenous women and girls face, such as SGBV. Meanwhile, US frameworks on WPS have not broached systemic inequalities within

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[2] Specific, Measurable, Attainable and action-oriented, Relevant, and Time-bound.

domestic institutions such as the judicial system, nor have they addressed the lack of protection afforded to women politicians and uniformed personnel.

III. Alternative WPS Mechanisms and Initiatives

Despite not adopting WPS NAPs, respondents indicated that they had introduced alternative measures which have advanced aspects of the WPS agenda. On this point, Singapore provided the following details through survey responses.

Protection and Prevention: Survey responses revealed that of the four WPS pillars, protection and prevention of gender-based violence have undergone the greatest level of institutionalization in Singapore. Singapore introduced the Women's Charter in 1961 and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1995. Together, these frameworks ensure that women are granted equal status before the law and that perpetrators of gender-based violence are prosecuted. Singapore has reformed discriminatory laws such as its penal code in 2007 to end impunity for marital rape. However, respondents stressed that laws cannot be adequately enforced until sociocultural attitudes that prevent reporting on SGBV are addressed.

Participation: The survey investigated formal mechanisms adopted by non-NAP countries that support the integration of women into politics, law enforcement, and the military. Singapore has not introduced any political or security-related quotas. However, it has pursued positive advertisement to encourage women to enter the military. Women account for 29% of Singapore's parliament, just short of the "critical mass" of 30% (regarded as the minimum percentage necessary for women parliamentarians to shape national policy). The need to look beyond one-size-fits-all strategies in accelerating WPS implementation was highlighted through participant responses. One respondent noted that the "general consensus" in Singapore is that a parliamentary quota "could lead to an exercise in affirmative action, as opposed to genuine participation or representation."

Relief & Recovery (R&R): Relief and recovery appears to be the least institutionalized of the four WPS pillars. Singapore has no formal mechanisms for including women and their needs in crisis management. At present, just one woman serves on Singapore's Covid task force team and is rarely present at meetings.

IV. The Impact and Viability of a Regional Action Plan (RAP) on WPS

All respondents were asked about the impact and viability of a regional action plan, specifically in relation to ASEAN. Many respondents discussed the potential impacts of an ASEAN RAP, while others raised insightful points concerning the viability of such a plan:

1. *Accelerate country-level implementation*: Several respondents argued that adopting a RAP in ASEAN would improve accountability, enhance monitoring processes, and create "healthy competition" among member-states. One respondent pointed out that encouraging ASEAN member-states to accelerate national-level WPS implementation would be advantageous given that just two of the ten countries that belong to ASEAN – Indonesia and the Philippines – have adopted NAPs (Indonesia and the Philippines).
2. *Improve uniformity and coordination*: Respondents highlighted that an ASEAN RAP would add uniformity to national WPS measures. Moreover, installing regional WPS architecture could open channels of communication between states, allowing them to share best practices. A RAP could also inform ASEAN institutions that focus on women's rights.
3. *Counter transnational crime*: One respondent remarked that the adoption of a RAP would bolster regional security. In particular, it could help address transnational threats to human security, such as people trafficking.
4. *Viability*: A number of respondents drew attention to the viability of a regional plan for ASEAN, noting that any regional framework must grapple with the distinct security needs, issues of sovereignty, and diverse systems of government that characterize ASEAN. In other words, an ASEAN RAP must build upon security needs and women's issues that are shared by all member-states. Cross-regional security needs highlighted in responses included economic insecurity, post-conflict reconstruction, the protection of women and girls from SGBV, counter extremism, and Covid-19.

Conclusion: The survey provided insights into the current status of WPS implementation in the Asia Pacific and allowed for the identification of several key themes. First, most NAPs have been effective in increasing women's visibility in decision-making structures and security institutions, and in responding to violence against women and girls. However, for NAPs to be effective, governments must ensure they contain concrete actions (including adequate funding) and expand their scope to embrace domestic and international gender issues. Countries and regions that lack NAPs have pursued alternative actions adopted "in the spirit" of advancing WPS, with *protection* achieving the greatest level of institutionalization and *relief and recovery* the least. Most respondents agreed on the advantages of a regional action plan for ASEAN, and some noted that for a RAP to be viable, it must build on security threats and priorities shared by all member-states.