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Key Findings

Second Meeting of Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP)

Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Study Group Meeting (virtual)

September 23-24 (Asia/Oceania) | September 22-23 (North America)

Two decades after the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) was adopted in 2000, it has developed into a major global security agenda. As of August 2021, 98 countries (or 51% of UN member states) have adopted a WPS National Action Plan (NAP). Within the Southeast Asian region there have been various agreements in the spirit of WPS, including the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in the ASEAN Region (2004), the Ha Noi Declaration on the Enhancement of the Welfare and Development of ASEAN Women and Children (2010), the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Elimination of Violence Against Children (2013), the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 including the ASEAN Political-Security (APSC) Blueprint 2025 (2015), the Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in ASEAN (2017), and the establishment of the ASEAN Women for Peace Registry (AWPR) (2018). Acknowledging and developing from this progress, the CSCAP WPS Study Group convened to encourage academics, researchers, and policymakers of CSCAP member committees to identify challenges and opportunities in the adoption of National and Regional Action Plans on WPS and other related issues in the Asia-Pacific. The meeting was also intended to provide a venue for CSCAP member committees to appraise past and present work and share ideas about future activities.

Reflecting upon the key findings of the first meeting, the second meeting of the CSCAP WPS study group aimed to address the opportunities and limitations to various strategies of implementation: with or without a NAP, as well as what relevance NAPs have for the possibility of a Regional Action Plan for ASEAN. The second meeting was attended by 37 individuals on day one and 34 on day two, representing CSCAP member committees from Australia, Canada, China, Indonesia, India, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Russia, the United States, and Vietnam. This meeting was structured into two sessions. The first session was entitled “Reflecting on Pluralism and Diversity to WPS Implementation.” The second session was dedicated to discussing three WPS special topics on “Eradication of Violence Against Women,” “Disaster, Relief and Recovery,” and “COVID-19 Pandemic.”

The key findings of this meeting are described below.

1. Reflecting on Pluralism and Diversity to WPS Implementation

During the first session, members and participants were assigned to two breakout groups based on whether or not the countries have a WPS National Action Plan. Group 1 consisted of members and participants representing contexts where NAPs are in place, while Group 2 was for those without NAPs. The groups discussed the strengths and weaknesses of their respective approaches, and what implications NAPs have for developing WPS strategy at the regional level.

Group 1 consisted of representatives from Australia, Canada, Japan, Indonesia, New Zealand, South Korea, the Philippines, and the United States. The group shared their respective countries' NAP overview, strengths and weaknesses, and recommendations for a regional action plan. The NAP overviews highlighted the key countries' different approaches to NAP cycles, NAP outlook, implementing agencies, financial resources (budgeting), and different ways of covering the four pillars (Participation, Protection, Prevention, and Relief and Recovery) of WPS. For example, South Korea has a total of 30 implementing agencies for their WPS NAP, while Indonesia involved mainly their Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection, and Ministry for Human Development and Culture. In terms of financing WPS NAPs, several countries have allocated budgets for their WPS NAP implementation, while others still rely on donors with no official government funding allocation. Overall, however, most NAPs push for gender-sensitive public budgeting. As for the different approaches to the four pillars, countries have made adjustments towards their national needs, tailored to current conditions and threats.

Regarding the strengths and advantages of having a NAP, all representatives pointed out that advancing the WPS agenda within their national contexts was made possible through the development and implementation of a NAP. This is because NAPs provide legal instruments as policy foundations for both national and foreign policies. Countries implementing a NAP show significant commitment to WPS implementation and have increased awareness of WPS issues within their populations, enabling grassroots approaches and collaboration between civil society organizations (CSOs). Having a NAP also allows for more gender-based analysis in decision-making, including through WPS advisory groups and leaders. The group also provided suggestions for the development of a regional action plan (RAP). Several suggestions were made: to harmonize ASEAN-CSCAP member states' WPS efforts; to encourage multisector collaboration on WPS efforts between government agencies, CSOs, and grassroots communities; and to further support women's leadership in security sector and peace processes, including highlighting their impact through success stories from the region. Participants agreed on the importance of diversity and inclusion, supporting men as allies, and the need to address masculinities within the security sector. Yet substantial and regular funding remains one of the key challenges that should be addressed in the next meeting.

Group 2 consisted of representatives from Malaysia, India, Vietnam, Singapore, China, Lao PDR, and Russia who discussed the opportunities or advantages of not having a NAP. It was pointed out that not having a NAP allows a broader understanding of security and avoids militarized language, which may limit women's empowerment and participation. Therefore, not having a NAP allows holistic approaches to security, such as including gender within development spheres. Group 2 members also suggested that it is easier to integrate WPS agenda goals into existing laws, policies,

and frameworks rather than creating a separate NAP on WPS. However, there are two important points the group acknowledged as pertaining to the limitations of not having a NAP: First, without a NAP, countries are unlikely to conduct periodic reviews and evaluations, and are likely to have limited resources, and little measurement and coordination on expressed commitments relating to WPS. Second, having a NAP fuels political will and awareness on WPS issues; without a NAP, there may be limited coordination of efforts to achieving WPS objectives. In discussing recommendations for a RAP, the group offered three suggestions for next steps: First, continuing awareness-raising and dialogue on WPS on a regional scale; second, continuing knowledge sharing and capacity-building; and third, allowing greater discussion on the correlation and relevance of WPS to other existing global frameworks.

In the subsequent plenary, the two groups shared their key findings, and specific attention was paid to implementing a RAP involving ASEAN and CSCAP members. Some noted that there needs to be a specified approach to increasing women's participation in peace processes and on security issues by emphasizing women's "meaningful participation," especially in ASEAN's currently male-dominated Political and Security pillar. It was also noted that there is room for possible collaboration on common concerns, such as in reducing sexual- and gender-based violence, the distribution of development assistance, providing disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding and conflict response, non-traditional security, and the youth, peace and security (YPS) agenda. There was a common sentiment of the need to sensitize and build relationships within the region around WPS, and to integrate the WPS agenda with other global and national frameworks.

2. WPS Special Topics: Eradication of Violence Against Women, Disaster, Relief and Recovery, and COVID-19 Pandemic

The meeting involved invited experts presenting on three specific thematic issues on WPS. On "Eradication of Violence Against Women," it was noted that there is diversity among countries in defining violence against women, especially on that which relates to the domestic sphere, such as intimate partner violence (IPV). It was noted that the pandemic has significantly increased the number of IPV cases due to lockdowns, increased financial stress, and job losses, with countries undertaking a variety of specific measures to respond to the problem. Several countries have expanded access to shelters, provided direct cash transfers, and allowed for virtual reporting and legal services to respond to and prevent IPV cases. Data on the global WPS Index was presented, and participants learned that progress has been made, but that it has slowed. Within the region, there are also countries facing greater challenges to eliminate violence against women, including in terms of reporting and also sex and age-disaggregated data collection. Discussions raised the need to have better means in reporting violence and methods of data collection to ensure consistency, inclusiveness, and transparency.

On "Disaster, Relief, and Recovery," it was noted that disasters bring socially constructed suffering, which affects women differently. Climate change is a risk multiplier in security settings, and as such, disaster management plans should integrate WPS objectives to avoid the

magnification of existing inequalities. In post-disaster situations, there is limited attention to women's resilience or agency; similarly, men's insecurities are often ignored or downplayed due to gender roles and norms. Most planning for disaster relief and recovery is rooted in militarized (masculine) decision-making, focusing primarily on technical knowledge and logistics while lacking a focus on social concerns. WPS pillars are important for developing inclusive and just responses to climate-related disasters. Participation would be best addressed through inclusion of women in decision-making processes essential for disaster preparation and response; the Prevention and Protection pillars can be implemented by engaging more women in the field as first responders; and the Relief and Recovery pillar should be addressed through women's participation and involvement in the collection of gender-disaggregated data. The discussion highlighted the need for linking WPS with disaster, especially in addressing complex emergencies, and thinking through what this means for the vulnerabilities that women are exposed to. There was also a call to see women not just as victims, and a need to do more research to recognize how they collectively lead and respond to disasters.

On the "COVID-19 pandemic," the presentation noted that in the current global condition of widened structural gender inequalities, governments often prioritize economic recovery, focusing on physical infrastructure rather than social infrastructure. COVID-19 has intensified the need for countries to respond adequately on gender inequalities and the integration of WPS agendas. During the discussion, participants pointed out the importance of community-based approaches for policy making and localization of WPS, especially during the pandemic, to ensure inclusivity. It was highlighted that a multiplicity of data sources and evidence are needed to understand how the pandemic is affecting ethnic, racial, or religious minorities and indigenous peoples. In particular, attention needs to be given to how the pandemic is affecting, in interrelated ways, women's economic and political participation, in addition to their physical safety due to rise in intimate-partner violence—and importantly, where resources are being allocated. These issues must be linked back to the WPS agenda and how countries are developing their action plans and programs inclusively.

Conclusion

CSCAP participants raised the importance of understanding WPS at the community level and within non-military contexts to develop a greater understanding of the localization of WPS principles in different local contexts in the region. Some pointed out a need to respond to the diversity and plurality in approaches to the WPS agenda to bridge differences and avoid leaving countries behind. From the exploration of specific topics, a strong theme emerged on the importance of integrating WPS in disaster management, specifically to identify differential impacts and vulnerabilities of women and girls, as well as how disasters exacerbate the vulnerabilities of women and girls. Going forward, aside from addressing the diversity and plurality of CSCAP members' approach to WPS, the Study Group must now determine what lessons can be used to come up with an agenda for regional cooperation. There was also a call to discuss WPS concerns for people with disabilities and integration with other agendas, such as youth, peace and security. To that end, CSCAP member committee representatives are encouraged to reflect on the main goal and outcome of the CSCAP WPS Study Group, that being for it to

effectively engage regional policymakers. Going forward, the WPS Study Group must consider what major contribution it wants to make for CSCAP and, subsequently, for the ASEAN Regional Forum.

This document was prepared by Ruth Latreia, Dr. Maria Tanyag and Dr. Fitriani. For more information, please contact Dr. Fitriani (fitri.bintang@csis.or.id). The findings reflect the view of the organizers; this is not a consensus document.