



ENHANCING REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

A Supplementary Report to CSCAP MEMORANDUM NO. [###](#)
from the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP)
Study Group on Women, Peace and Security

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to supplement the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Study Group (CSCAP)¹ Memorandum #35 on furthering the development of the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda within the Asia-Pacific, and to provide additional insights and recommendations from the CSCAP Study Group on Women, Peace and Security to support the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action and other regional bodies' approaches to international cooperation on WPS.

CONTEXT

The United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in October 2000. The resolution acknowledges the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction. It further stresses the importance of women's involvement in all efforts for maintaining and promoting peace and security. Resolution 1325 urges all actors to increase the participation of women, eliminate sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and incorporate gender perspectives in all peace and security efforts. Over two decades later, Women, Peace and Security (WPS) has developed into a major global security agenda, including 9 additional resolutions that have expanded the promotion of gender equality along the conflict continuum. As of September 2023, 107 countries—roughly 55 percent of UN member states—have adopted a WPS National Action Plan (NAP). Additionally, regional organizations have begun to develop action plans for implementation, including the European Union, the Pacific Island Forum (PIF), and ASEAN. However many of these require full ratification or thorough updates. On November 16, 2022, ASEAN launched its first Regional Plan of Action (RPA) on Women, Peace and Security. The ASEAN RPA WPS builds upon previous



agreements and commitments made by ASEAN member states on issues related to women's rights and violence against women. The development of the ASEAN RPA WPS was recommended in a study supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and UN Women, and it aims to integrate WPS into regional policies and frameworks across different areas such as politics, economics, and culture. The PIF 2012-2015 Regional Action Plan (RAP) provides a framework at the regional level for Forum Members and Pacific Territories to enhance women's leadership in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, mainstream gender in security policymaking, and ensure women and girls' human rights are protected in humanitarian crises, transitional contexts, and post-conflict situations. It also sets out a regional mechanism that will support regional and national efforts.²

¹ CSCAP comprises 21 full members, including Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, Canada, China, the Europe Union, India, Indonesia, Japan, DPR Korea, Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Thailand, the United States of America, and Vietnam and one associate member, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

² PeaceWomen project of WILPF: Pacific Regional Action Plan summary: <https://www.peacewomen.org/peacewomen.org/rap-pacific>

COUNCIL FOR SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC LAUNCHES WPS STUDY GROUP

In 2020, CSCAP member committees USCSCAP launched the first-ever Study Group on WPS to advance the WPS agenda in the Asia-Pacific Region. The study group has been co-chaired by USCSCAP, CSCAP Indonesia, and CSCAP New Zealand, and has been well attended by individuals from academia, military, and research institutes representing CSCAP member committees from Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, Canada, China, Chinese Taipei, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, South Korea, Russia, the United States, and Vietnam.

The WPS Study Group's overarching goal has been focused on the advancement of the WPS agenda in the Asia-Pacific and has aimed to augment the progress already being made on implementing the WPS agenda in the region at the Track-1 level, as well as within CSCAP. The nine objectives of CSCAP Study Group on WPS, as set out in the original USCSCAP WPS Study Group proposal, are outlined below:

- Objective 1 Collect data on female participation in CSCAP events for baselining/further improvement. Identify which topics/initiatives are the highest priority for CSCAP to integrate a gender perspective (“gender mainstreaming”).
- Objective 2 Baseline & raise WPS awareness among CSCAP members and provide information/training to increase policymakers’ fluency in the WPS agenda.
- Objective 3 Explore how CSCAP Study Group’s objectives are aligned with and can feed into the ARF's envisioned goals in advancing WPS in the Asia-Pacific.
- Objective 4 Assess the implementation of existing WPS initiatives/UN Security Council Resolution 325 and its related UN resolutions in regional countries. Identify barriers to the creation/implementation of National Action Plans and a Regional Action Plan; and challenges to adopting inclusive gender norms in the region.
- Objective 5 Foster stronger ties in both Track-2 and Track-1 levels by cultivating a network of Civil Society Organizations, Non-Government Organizations, and next-generation peacebuilders in ASEAN and the broader region; using both virtual and in-person means.
- Objective 6 Assess and bridge any differences between defense and foreign ministry efforts toward implementing the WPS agenda in the region.
- Objective 7 Assess progress and differences between the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint and ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) Blueprint in incorporating WPS principles and make recommendations for integration.
- Objective 8 Publish expert papers as part of Study Group conference reports.
- Objective 9 Develop a CSCAP Memo on WPS with practical recommendations for advancement of the WPS agenda in the region.

FOUR CSCAP WPS STUDY GROUP MEETINGS

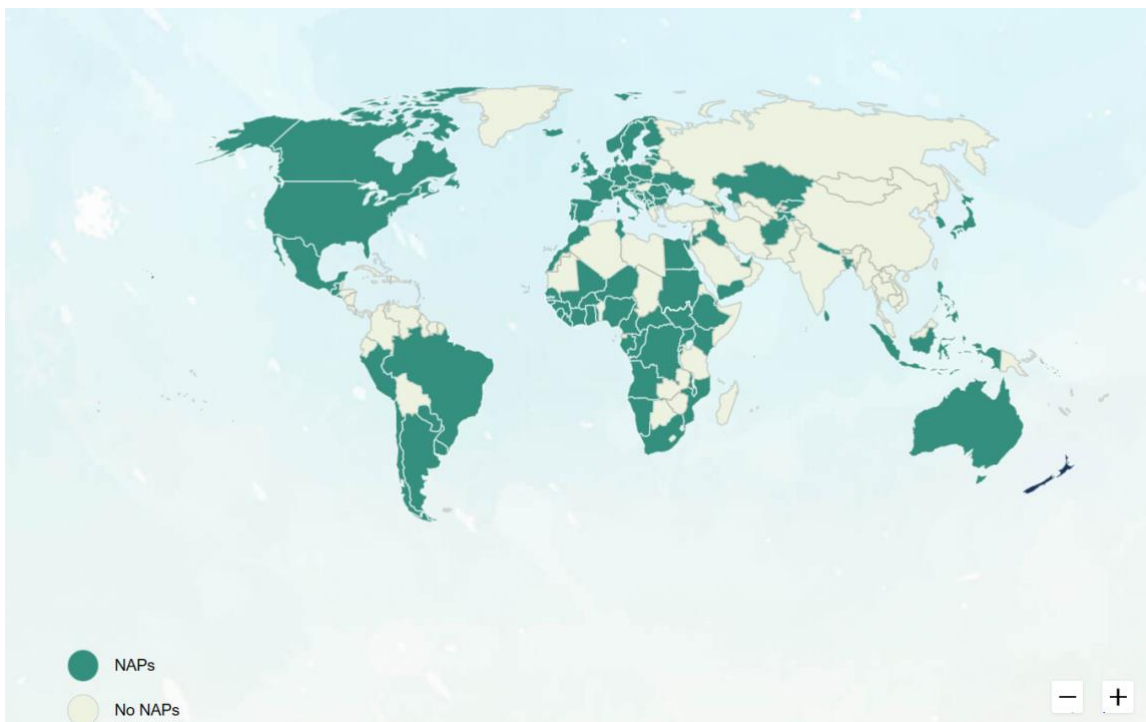
The CSCAP WPS Study Group convened in June 2021, September 2021, September 2022, and March 2023 to provide an opportunity for CSCAP member committees and supporting experts, researchers, and policymakers to identify progress made to date and various remaining challenges and opportunities surrounding the implementation of the WPS Agenda within the Asia-Pacific region.

Inaugural WPS Study Group Meeting (Virtual, June 2021)

The first CSCAP WPS Study Group Meeting, hosted by USCSCAP and convened in June 2021, focused on the challenges and opportunities in the adoption of National and Regional Action Plans on WPS in the Asia-Pacific. One of the main themes discussed in the first meeting was how the WPS agenda is understood and translated into policy and practice and member organizations were encouraged to define the WPS agenda. This meeting also canvassed the critical components of and challenges in NAP implementation. The group noted there are clear, promising signs of positive outcomes produced by the work of regional women’s groups in ASEAN and agreed more work was needed to assess regional cooperation and the ASEAN regional plan of action process.

Figure 1 provides an overview of global NAP adoption, and Table 1 below summarizes CSCAP member committee countries with and without NAPs.

Figure 1: Overview of countries with and without NAPs³



³ Biddolph, Caitlin and Laura J. Shepherd (2022) WPS National Action Plans: Content Analysis and Data Visualisation, v3. Online, at <https://www.wpsnaps.org/>

Table 1: Overview of CSCAP member committee countries with and without NAPs

National Action Plan in Place ⁴ (9)	No National Action Plan in Place (13)
Australia	Brunei
Canada	Cambodia
European Union (though several EU countries have not participated: Hungary, Belarus, Greece, and Turkey)	China
Indonesia	India
Japan	Lao
New Zealand	North Korea
Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (expired)	Malaysia
South Korea	Mongolia
The Philippines	Myanmar
The United States of America	Papua New Guinea
	Russia
	Singapore
	Thailand
	Vietnam

Second WPS Study Group Meeting (Virtual, September 2021)

The second meeting, hosted by CSCAP Indonesia and held in September 2021, was attended by over 35 people from 15 countries. It emphasized the importance of WPS at the community level and within non-military contexts to further the understanding of the localization of WPS principles in different contexts. The member organizations took the chance to reflect on pluralism and diversity in WPS implementation and placed emphasis on the meaningful participation of women in peace processes.

It was found that there is room for cooperation on common concerns, such as on issues related to reducing gender-based violence, directing development assistance, and designing disaster relief, as well as implementation of the WPS agenda at the national level. The meeting concluded by underscoring the need for localization of WPS implementation and effective engagement of regional policymakers.

Third WPS Study Group Meeting (Virtual, June 2022)

The third meeting, hosted by CSCAP NZ, was attended by 29 individuals representing 10 CSCAP member committees. The group began with a review of the study group's original objectives and progress made toward them, followed by a presentation on the status of the ASEAN RPA on WPS. This meeting offered thematic discussions on WPS implementation with expert presentations on: disaster management, countering terrorism, cybersecurity, and women in the security forces. The meeting concluded with a discussion on final topics to cover at the next meeting in preparation for completing the CSCAP Memo.

Fourth WPS Study Group Meeting (Hybrid Virtual/In-Person, March 2023)

The fourth Study Group meeting was held in March 2023 in a hybrid format (virtually and in person in Honolulu, Hawai'i). This meeting encouraged a gendered perspective throughout CSCAP studies, and featured discussions on ensuring timely and relevant insights on longstanding policy and security issues. The Study Group received insights from experts on various important topics related to the WPS

⁴ PeaceWomen: National Action Plans by Region: <https://1325naps.peacewomen.org/index.php/nap-overview/> as of September 4, 2023.

agenda. These topics included the implementation of the WPS agenda by the US, Australian, and NATO armed forces; regional approaches to WPS in ASEAN, the Pacific Islands, and Africa; the root causes of gender inequality and the significance of transforming gender norms that determine unpaid care burdens; as well as the need for gender balance in defense and security narratives, security research, the media, and in groups like CSCAP.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

The following is a summary of the cross-cutting themes discussed at the four WPS study group meetings.

WPS IMPLEMENTATION

Defining WPS Approaches

One of the main themes discussed throughout the study group series was how the WPS agenda is understood and translated into policy and practice. The WPS agenda consists of four main pillars: Participation, Protection, Prevention, and Relief and Recovery. While there was consensus that ensuring gender equality in all these pillars was important, there were clear differences in approaches among and within countries. For example, the development or lack of WPS National Action Plans (NAPs) reflect principled positions. Participants who argue in favor of adopting a WPS NAP believe the WPS agenda requires a stand-alone action plan. On the other

hand, representatives from countries without a NAP pointed out that the absence of a NAP does not indicate a lack of support for WPS, but rather their own interpretation of how to ensure that the goals and visions embedded within the WPS pillars are successfully integrated in all areas of life. Even among countries of the same position on NAP adoption there is great variation in approaches. This summary captures some of the most salient points of view raised by CSCAP member committees throughout the four Study Group meetings.

Those who advocate for NAP adoption argue that NAPs provide legal instruments as policy foundations for both national and foreign policies. To be successful, however, WPS NAPs also require critical components and they must address some persistent challenges in order to ensure success (summarized in Table 2).

Table 2: Overview of CSCAP member committee countries with and without NAPs

Critical Components of WPS NAP Implementation	Challenges of WPS NAP Implementation
Champions from all sectors	Adequate and sustained resources including gender-responsive budgeting
Independent review of WPS plans and progress	Barriers to institutionalization of WPS goals
Strong civil society participation	Compartmentalization of WPS and lack of coordination among different implementing agencies and stakeholders
Ownership among broad cross-section of society to capture traditional and often-hidden issues related to WPS	Representation of women as ‘victims’ or ‘vulnerable groups’ without agency
Collection of sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive qualitative and quantitative data	Lack of women’s intersectional identities (ignoring race, class, ethnicity, religion, etc.)

Critical Components of WPS NAP Implementation	Challenges of WPS NAP Implementation
Localization processes that enable communities to implement WPS differently in response to communities’ distinct needs	Lack of connection between international and domestic issues of violence against women
Dedicated budget for implementation	WPS action plans are often silent on demilitarization and addressing the challenge of scaling down the global arms trade (core principles for many WPS advocates)

Some countries, including Malaysia, India, Singapore, China, Lao PDR, and Russia, have made the case that *not* having a NAP can allow for a broader understanding of security. Representatives from countries without a NAP have suggested that the absence of a NAP does not indicate a lack of support for WPS, but rather a different interpretation of how to ensure that the goals and visions embedded within WPS pillars are successfully integrated in all areas of life. They suggest not having a NAP allows WPS principles to be actively linked with pre-existing national development plans and processes to meet the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda or national gender equality commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), approaches to gender equality that pre-date the WPS agenda. States, for example, may not want to engage with the language and specific mechanisms entailed in implementing a WPS NAP due to concerns of scrutiny into domestic affairs, or they may find particular issue areas too politically sensitive. Not having a NAP may allow for a more holistic approach to security, such as including gender within development spheres. In some cases, it is easier to integrate WPS agenda goals into existing laws, politics, and frameworks, than it is to create a separate NAP on WPS.

Nevertheless, countries without a NAP also acknowledged that there are two main disadvantages to not developing a NAP. First, without a NAP, countries are unlikely to conduct periodic reviews and evaluations, and may not have sufficient resources, measurement

mechanisms, 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 little coordination of efforts or avenues for grassroots advocacy to achieve WPS objectives.

Common Variations on WPS Implementation

Regardless of whether a state adopts a WPS NAP, there are many cross-regional differences in WPS implementation. For instance, participants noted variations in the scope and relevance attributed to state and civil society actors in implementing WPS principles. In some countries, the core implementing agencies are from the government, including the security sector, while in others its development agencies or civil society. Relatedly, WPS can be implemented inwardly or outwardly, in domestic laws or as foreign policy, or both. There was a consistent focus on progressively bridging the implementation of WPS at the domestic, regional and international levels. Furthermore, the need to not limit WPS implementation to traditional definitions of armed conflicts as inter and intra-state violence was also discussed. It was recommended that WPS principles must be increasingly broadened and integrated with disaster risk reduction, COVID-19 pandemic response, prevention of violence by and in extractive industries, as well as with other humanitarian areas of concern.

Study Group participants agreed that contextualization and acknowledgement of intersectional concerns are crucial, noting that WPS implementation must change focus and

adapt to emerging needs and pressures. WPS should not be “fixed” or “static,” and instead must be reformulated or contextualized in light of emerging security issues. The need to address the intersectionality of gender, racial, class, and religious inequalities was also frequently raised as a recurring issue. As such, just as there is no single homogenous ‘women and girls’ category that describes all women or all women’s experiences, rather than refer to a homogenous WPS agenda, it is more accurate to consider the localization of WPS agendas. WPS implementation—both globally and domestically—has been successful when it is responsive to different security issues and adapted to national or local dynamics.

Regional approaches to WPS implementation

The topic of how to support the development and implementation of the ASEAN RPA on WPS was frequently raised. Topical discussions allowed Study Group participants to debate and develop recommendations for improvement of the ASEAN RPA on WPS process. Lessons from other regional approaches to WPS implementation were also instructive regarding the ASEAN RPA on WPS. The case study of the

PIF’s regional WPS approach⁵ suggests that an existence of WPS agenda does not necessarily indicate a meaningful or holistic approach to WPS implementation. In particular, it was noted that though the PIF RAP offered indigenous solutions aligned with WPS principles, it perhaps might not be recognized as such for not ‘speaking the language’ of WPS. Hence there is a need to reconcile the informed enactment of the agenda with ‘speaking the language’ of WPS.

Africa’s case emphasized the importance of diverse consultation approaches (top down and bottom up), the importance of flexibility and safe places for negotiating a regional plan, and the enduring problem of gender norms impacting parental care work. Furthermore, on the African continent, countries experiencing greater instability often see the development of a regional plan on WPS as a useful vehicle in achieving WPS goals, as this could help bypass national roadblocks to WPS implementation. Thus, regional plans can act as loud hailer. It was also noted that accountability is also vital to localizing and contextualizing plans for achieving WPS agenda.



⁵ Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012-2015: https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/pacific_region_regional_action_plan_2012-2015.pdf



WPS AND TRADITIONAL SECURITY ISSUES

Eradicating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

Data on the global WPS Index was presented, and participants learned that progress on SGBV has been made, but that it has slowed, and in some cases has reversed over the past 5 years. It was noted that the pandemic significantly increased rates of SGBV due to lockdowns, increased financial stress, and job losses, with countries undertaking a variety of specific measures to respond to the problems. For instance, several countries expanded access to shelters, provided direct cash transfers, and allowed for virtual reporting and legal services to respond to and prevent SGBV. Within the region, there are countries facing greater challenges to eliminating SGBV, including in terms of difficulty of reporting and the absence of sex and age-disaggregated data. This is hampered by the fact that there is diversity among countries in defining SGBV, especially that which relates to the domestic setting, such as intimate partner violence. Discussions raised the need to have better means of reporting violence and methods of data collection to ensure consistency, inclusiveness, and transparency.

Women in the Armed Forces

Globally, women and men still serve in the armed forces at significantly different rates. “Women comprise 40 percent of the world’s workforce, but only 10.9 percent of NATO member-nation active-duty military personnel (2016), and only 17 percent of active-duty US service members (2018).”⁶ Only 32 percent of peace agreements in 2021 included gender provisions. Including women in security forces has the potential to help dismantle patriarchal norms, stimulate positive attitudes toward women, and influence other sectors, particularly with an awareness of intersectional concerns and the need for implementation of institutional culture change. Furthermore, the WPS Agenda has delineated the need for women to be at all ‘security tables’ - in diplomacy, in intelligence gathering and analysis, in decision making, as well as all other security-related spheres. Nevertheless, women’s participation in armed forces and in peacemaking and peacebuilding still significantly lags behind that of men, as reports from the United States Asia-Pacific Command, the Australian military, New Zealand defense forces, and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) demonstrated.

⁶ Belsey Priebe, Maryruth, “Why Gender Balance Matters for Equity and Peace in the Indo-Pacific.” <https://pacforum.org/publication/issues-insights->

[vol-23-wp1-why-gender-balance-matters-for-equity-and-peace-in-the-indo-pacific](https://pacforum.org/publication/issues-insights-vol-23-wp1-why-gender-balance-matters-for-equity-and-peace-in-the-indo-pacific)

These reports noted varying perspectives on WPS and its implementation among nations despite the consensus on its significance. For instance, the understanding of WPS within the US rests on (external) operationalization and (internal) institutionalization of the agenda through the Department of Defense’s three objectives: improving the defense sector (internal) by operationalizing gender perspectives to inform mission planning; promoting meaningful participation (externally); and, ensuring safety and security of women/girls by conducting training and engagements on gender-based violence as well as exercise scenarios for militaries.

For NATO, there is consensus among allies that puts gender equality at the center of its newest strategy, as reflected in the NATO 2021-2025 Action Plan on WPS.⁷ It is structured around three principles: integration (making gender equality an integral part of NATO policies, programs, and projects); inclusiveness (increasing women’s representation across NATO and national forces to enhance operational effectiveness); and integrity (addressing systemic inequalities to ensure fair and equal treatment of women and men, while increasing accountability and awareness of the WPS agenda throughout NATO).⁸ Where there is a lack of consensus on how to define ‘gender equality,’ NATO uses the concept of human security as its reference point.⁹

In New Zealand’s defense forces, despite limited training integration and operational processes, the focus is gradually shifting to finding ways to integrate a gender perspective into military operations with cultural empathy and human rights.

Australia’s current NAP centers on four outcomes, namely, supporting women’s meaningful participation and needs in peace processes; reducing sexual and gender-based violence; supporting resilience; and demonstrating leadership and accountability in

WPS. Notably, for the first time, Home Affairs was included in the second NAP (2021-2031), which is rights-based and focused on systemic change. Additionally, Australia’s breakthrough document, “Defense Gender, Peace and Security Mandate” lays down six lines of effort: policy and doctrine; education and training; personnel; mission readiness and effectiveness; international engagement through defense diplomacy; and governance and reporting.

Though significant variation among approaches to implementing WPS strategies was observed, one thing most security structures have in common is the fact that war is becoming increasingly techno-enabled and moving away from the need to recruit security personnel based on physical strength. Including women in security forces, particularly with an awareness of intersectional concerns, can help dismantle patriarchal norms, stimulate positive attitudes toward women, and influence other sectors. Cultural norms and systems will have to be redefined, such as by improving family support systems, addressing women’s double-burden (performing duties and being responsible for civilizing culture), and engaging men and masculinities.

Comparing the varied WPS understandings of states, it is essential to highlight that since the mere presence of women in security spaces need not translate into greater reflection of WPS principles within the armed forces, there is a need to shift to thinking about how effectively a gender perspective is being implemented in the culture and institutions of security structures and policies. Furthermore, there has historically been little room for WPS discussions within traditional security issues such as nuclear submarines, alliances, strategic rivalries, etc. The experts noted that it is crucial to center the voices of women to encourage the broader understanding, significance, and effectiveness of the WPS agenda. Some suggestions included increasing the number of gender focal points, recruitment of a gender advisor within armed forces, increasing

⁷ NATO Action Plan for the Implementation of the NATO/EAPC Policy on Women, Peace and Security 2021-2025:

https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_187485.htm

⁸ NATO’s WPS page:

https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_91091.htm#:~:text=Three%20prin

https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_91091.htm#:~:text=Three%20principles%20guide%20NATO's%20work,by%20effective%20gender%20mainstreaming%20practices

⁹ NATO Introductory Guide on Women, Peace and Human Security:

https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_07/201907_10_1907-wps-resource-guide.pdf

efforts towards NAP implementation that fit well in the context-specific role of military, and most importantly, ensuring the implementation of WPS from policy to practice with adequate budgetary support.

Women in Violent Extremism, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament

A gender perspective on “Countering terrorism” offers insights into women’s intersectional identities which impact their involvement in violent extremism. In particular, WPS raises awareness of issues in preventing and countering violent extremism among women, remembering each woman is a unique single entity, and that there is a great diversity amongst the women involved in violent extremism. If the security sector ignores gender, they will not see the ways in which women are implicated in terrorist acts. Hearing grassroots civil society organizations’ perspectives is of particular importance in strategizing how better to address and counter violent extremism among women.

Women’s engagement in disarmament and nonproliferation arms control is also vital to discussions on peacebuilding and conflict resolution, however, fewer than half of the WPS NAPs include specific actions of disarmament and nonproliferation arms control despite its importance for the realization of the WPS agenda. Of all the forums on arms control and disarmament, only 32 percent of delegates are women, and the number drops to 20 percent in smaller fora. In this regard, education and training can be enablers for meaningful participation of women in weapons of mass destruction (WMD) nonproliferation diplomacy. Moreover, more awareness needs to be built about the fact that the use of weapons affects everyone regardless of gender, inclusiveness in peace negotiations is therefore essential.

Gender in Security Discourse and the Media

It is also important that women’s representation and women’s views be evident in peace and

security discourse, in research, and in the media. Diversity brings better results, new experiences, and perspectives to the table. Nevertheless, men continue to dominate the security sector in virtually all public facets. For instance, men-only panels (or “manels”)—whether in the news or in security think tanks—are still very common, and lend weight to the false assumption that women lack expertise in hard security fields. Women’s engagement is therefore critical to dispelling these myths, and more importantly to pave the way for women to achieve greater career progression and advancement in the security sector, enabling them to take on more leadership positions over time.

Looking at Pacific Forum programming, data from the Pacific Forum Gender Tracker¹⁰ reveals that men are still in the majority in the organization’s panels and as authors of published works. However, there are approaches to increasing women’s representation that offer alternative paths. For instance, virtual Pacific Forum programming during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an increase in women’s participation in security-themed events; a subsequent return to in-person events has shown a decrease in women’s participation rates. Barriers to entry such as limitations of travel, budgets, time, and unpaid care and family responsibilities may prevent women from remaining engaged at higher levels, and therefore should be considered when planning security engagements.

Similarly, media offers powerful avenues for sharing women’s voices and offering visibility to women’s perspectives and leadership in all aspects of security and is therefore vital to achieving WPS goals. Yet in the media, women make up only 20 percent of experts, 4 percent of eyewitnesses, and 37 percent of reporters,¹¹ highlighting the need for meaningful engagement of women. True progress will only be achieved with equal and meaningful representation and inclusion of women and their views in media.

¹⁰ Pacific Forum Gender Tracker: <https://pacforum.org/gender-tracker>

¹¹ Rodriguez, Leah, “6 Unbelievable Facts About How Badly Women Are Represented in Media”, Global Citizen, 2021, <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/women-media-representation-facts/>



WPS AND NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY ISSUES

Health and Environmental Disaster Resilience and Recovery

Health and environmental crises must be considered in the landscape of security threats due to their potential to destabilize entire societies by increasing fragility at the individual, community, and national levels. When any of these threats combine with serious gender inequalities, the likelihood of such disasters having disproportionate impacts on women is significantly increased. Perhaps the greatest threat multiplier of our time is climate change. Given the ways in which climate change will become the background to which all peace negotiations are held, there is a need to increase women's participation in combating climate change, with an emphasis on preventing climate change from reinforcing existing gender inequalities. As such, defense and security institutions must consider health and environmental hazards--with a gender perspective--in their policies and planning.

Whether or not extreme weather or health crises develop into wide-scale disasters depends in part

on socially constructed identities 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. In post-disaster situations, limited attention is often paid to women's agency, resilience, and post-crisis needs; similarly, men's insecurities are often ignored or downplayed due to gender roles and norms. The WPS pillars are a useful framework for developing inclusive and just responses to health- and environmentally related disasters. Participation demands the inclusion of women in decision-making processes essential for disaster preparation and response; the Protection pillar can be implemented through gender sensitivity training for all first responders, and increasing women's presence in disaster response personnel; the Prevention pillar calls for addressing women's human rights during and after disasters, engaging women in disaster-related violence prevention strategies, and involving women meaningfully in environmental peacebuilding; and the Relief and Recovery pillar

should be addressed through women’s leadership in designing and implementing relief and recovery strategies. The discussion called for seeing women not just as victims but as active agents of change.

The COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated many of the ways in which health and environmental crises increase gender inequities, thereby making communities and entire states less resilient to future crises. The pandemic widened structural gender inequalities, especially in those countries where governments have prioritized economic recovery focused on physical infrastructure rather than social infrastructure. COVID-19 also impacted women’s economic and political participation, in addition to their physical safety due to a rise in SGBV. These issues must be linked back to the WPS agenda and how countries are developing their action plans and programs inclusively.

WPS in Digitalization and Cybersecurity

Only five of 107 adopted NAPs on WPS referred to cyber issues and only 24 percent of the multilateral cyber-diplomacy delegations were led by women. Moreover, a significant gendered digital divide, combined with a rise in cyber-violence, has made women particularly insecure in the information age. As such, the security community must also consider the role WPS principles play in cybersecurity and digital governance. Women often experience misogynistic hate speech; online violence spreading to real-life violence; data breaches that impact privacy (on sexual and reproductive health, human rights, dignity, and self-development); and discrimination. Women in security fields need to be empowered, receive training on WPS awareness, and be involved in policymaking and the production of technologies whilst more should be done to educate law enforcement on gendered forensics and evidence collection. Better programs for increasing digital literacy on sexual and gender-based violence and cyber-diplomacy should be developed and tech companies engaged to develop improved prevention mechanisms.

Gender Norms and Human Security

Over the last 5+ years, gains for women’s rights have been rolled back in many regions of the world. This backsliding means that, at the current rate, it will take another 300 years to achieve global gender equality. Yet research shows that a state’s security and stability can be predicted by the level of safety experienced by its women; the greater women’s equality and security all levels of society, the more robust a state’s security. As such, backsliding must be resisted, and efforts to advance the WPS goals must be scaled up. This can be achieved in national security structures and international fora through increased support for women human rights defenders, peacebuilders, and civil society; women’s meaningful participation in all peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding; rethinking the rise in military spending; reducing the financing deficit for gender equality; protecting women’s and girls’ human rights in conflict-affected countries; and, investing in high quality data on WPS. A new generation of feminists, including men who are comfortable demonstrating pro-feminist values, needs to be included to accelerate women’s leadership and support gender-responsive budgeting.

The challenges to women’s human security must also be addressed by resolving root causes that stem from ideological, religious, and other causes of social inequality. For instance, among nations with predominantly religious cultures, women are generally barred from engaging in leadership roles, especially those that involve religious interpretation. As such, when conflicts are religiously based, diplomatic efforts such as ceasefire negotiations are regarded as the sphere of men. Dealing with these complex issues therefore requires a comprehensive and effective context-bound implementation of the WPS agenda in nations with diverse socio-cultural composition.

A nearly universal root cause of gender inequality is the burden placed on women by social norms that make care and domestic tasks a woman’s responsibility, limiting her constructed role to domestic spheres that comprise largely undervalued and unpaid work. Some nations have

taken small steps to address this root cause of gender inequality. For example, the Philippines has adopted compensation/minimum wage standards for stay-at-home mothers at 2000 pesos monthly; and Mexico defines domestic employers as those that enable social protection schemes for domestic workers. However, unpaid care work and domestic work in most other nations has caused widening gender inequality, preventing women from participating in/returning to the formal labor market to obtain decent work, resulting in increased dependency of women on men, increased SGBV with women as victims, and passing on of women’s vulnerability and poverty to their children. In addition to the need for national regulations that empower women in all spheres of life, the World Bank’s definition of empowerment as “the process of increasing individual or group capacity to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions

and outcomes” needs a more holistic definition that includes a supportive community, and a sense of security for women, such that they can reach their full potential.

Importantly, attention must be paid to the ways in which gender inequalities are country-specific. Women face different hindrances to their empowerment in Southeast Asia (domestic violence and rape), China (gender discrimination and sexism, social pressure on females), the MENA region (child marriage, sexual assault, and harassment), Sub-Saharan Africa (domestic violence and child marriage), OECD countries (campus rape, sexual assault, and harassment), and so on. Consequently, WPS implementation must be context-specific, based on a holistic understanding of women, and promoted through shared values that see women as assets.

NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the foregoing WPS Issues of Concern, the following recommendations are made to:

The CSCAP Secretariat and CSCAP Member Committees

1. Commit to measuring and reporting sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data, including that for CSCAP member committees, CSCAP leadership, event participation, subject matter experts and speakers, and other contributors, and use this data to create baselines and goals for increasing women's participation at all levels of CSCAP.
2. Create a plan for reaching gender parity on all speaker panels and committees. This could be supported by using the Pacific Forums roster of expert female speakers.
3. Ensure CSCAP members have a basic working knowledge of the WPS agenda by providing regular training at the General Conference.
4. Encourage the application of a gender perspective on all panels and in all CSCAP Study Groups.
5. Provide an option for hybrid attendance at events where feasible to make meetings more accessible to those with heavy care burdens.
6. Develop a plan to actively recruit women (and youth) to participate as CSCAP member committee representatives.
7. Provide supplemental financial resources for women (and young people) to fully participate in CSCAP activities and seek their input in agenda creation and direction of the organization.

ASEAN Regional Forum

The Study Group would like to commend the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) on developing their RPA to support the WPS agenda in the region. To strengthen WPS efforts, the Study Group recommends the following to:

The ASEAN Regional Forum Experts and Eminent Persons

1. Collect sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data; measure gender equality in local contexts.
2. Mainstream WPS principles within climate security policies and planning.
3. Develop a plan to increase women's participation in tackling key security issues, particularly the conflict-prone areas, including Myanmar and Mekong issues, among others.
4. Ensure WPS is considered in the development of the post-2025 ASEAN Community Vision.
5. Develop gender education programs and initiatives targeting the younger generation to sensitize them to issues such as unpaid care work and to dismantle gender stereotypes.
6. Develop a plan to address the underlying gendered structures within the ASEAN Secretariat that impede meaningful participation of women at all levels of government, peace processes, and security structures.

The ASEAN RPA Committee

1. Mainstream climate security within the ASEAN WPS RPA.
2. Encourage all ASEAN countries to track, measure, and publish progress on a common set of WPS goals. Countries with WPS NAPs should include such metrics in future NAP documents. Non-NAP ASEAN countries that support WPS should define, adopt, and track a set of parameters aligned with RPA data goals, and create a plan to enhance the scope of such progress.
3. Develop formal mechanisms whereby ASEAN countries (with and without NAPs) can continue to share experiences and best practices on implementation of WPS issue-areas addressed in/related to the RPA.
4. Ensure subsequent ASEAN RPA discussions robustly address bridging the gaps in implementation of WPS domestically and internationally.
5. Encourage all countries to commit to a minimum investment percentage in WPS implementation, from both defense and domestic development agencies.
6. Amplify support for women's leadership in the security sector and peace processes by using the ASEAN media platform(s) to highlight women's impact through security-related success stories from the region.
7. Stress the importance of understanding women as having complex identities: encourage understanding of the intersection of multiple inequalities with gender (including race, ethnicity, age, class, socioeconomic, and religion) and the need for contextualization of WPS principles.
8. Be more deliberate and explicit about applying WPS principles to the RPA on the following issues:
 - Sexual- and gender-based violence

- Gender-transformative distribution of development, disaster relief, and humanitarian assistance
 - Gender-inclusive peacebuilding and conflict responses
 - Tech-enabled cyber crime
9. Encourage alignment of WPS relief and recovery pillar language with disaster preparedness and response in both domestic and regional contexts.

The ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW)

1. Mainstream climate security, digital security, and women in security forces within the ACW.

The ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC)

1. Mainstream climate security, digital security, and women in security forces within the ACWC.

The ASEAN-USAID Partnership for Regional Optimization with the Political-Security and Socio-Cultural Communities (PROSPECT)

1. Develop a deliberate approach to increasing women’s participation by emphasizing women’s ‘meaningful participation’ in ASEAN’s male-dominated Political and Security Pillar.
2. Expand the definition of "security" within the "Political and Security Pillar" to include "human security" through practical changes such as more emphasis on the lived experiences of insecurity by vulnerable groups.

The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)

1. Update and ratify the PIF WPS RAP, being sure to include participation of grassroots communities in all deliberations.
2. Encourage all PIF countries to track, measure, and publish progress on a common set of WPS goals. Countries with WPS NAPs should include such metrics in future NAP documents. Non-NAP PIF countries that support WPS should define, adopt, and track a set of parameters aligned with RPA data goals, and create a plan to enhance the scope of such progress.
3. Develop formal mechanisms whereby PIF countries (with and without NAPs) can continue to share experiences and best practices on implementation of WPS issue-areas addressed in/related to the RAP.
4. Ensure subsequent PIF RAP discussions robustly address bridging the gaps in implementation of WPS at home and abroad.
5. Encourage all countries to commit to a minimum investment percentage in WPS implementation, from both defense and domestic development agencies.
6. Develop a plan to address the underlying gendered structures within the PIF that impede meaningful participation of women at all levels of peace processes and security governance.

National Governments in the Asia-Pacific

Domestic Policies

1. Collect sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data; measure gender equality in local contexts.

2. Mainstream WPS principles within climate security policies and planning, and climate security principles in WPS policies and planning.
3. Develop a federal requirement to consider gender in all policies to ensure systematic consideration of WPS principles and the gender implications of decisions across sectors, either through a WPS NAP or a comprehensive gender policy.
4. Create a strategy to track, measure, and increase women’s meaningful participation and leadership in conflict prevention, security missions, and peace processes either through a WPS NAP or a comprehensive gender policy.
5. Apply WPS principles in domestic policymaking just as it is in and foreign policymaking.
6. Regularly collect sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data in all aspects of peace and security; commit to transparency in sharing this data.
7. Require that all federal agencies (foreign and domestic defense, development, and relief/recovery) commit to a minimum investment percentage in WPS implementation.
8. Actively develop ‘men as WPS allies’ programs within all government agencies through proactive training and education.
9. Integrate prevention of violence against women into pre-disaster resilience planning, first-response disaster recovery, and long-term recovery efforts.
10. Combat gendered tech-enabled harms through cybersecurity measures and policies, addressing issues such as online violence, data breaches, hate speech, and discrimination.
11. Adopt employment policies that address gender-based discrimination and ensure equal access to opportunities in all government sectors and for the public (e.g., family policies: equal parental leave).

Security and Foreign Policies

1. Develop and implement a plan to dismantle/discourage toxic ‘masculinities’ within security sector culture.
2. Encourage multi-sector collaboration on WPS efforts between government agencies, CSOs, media, and grassroots communities.
3. Provide training and capacity building for (women) peace negotiators, politicians, and security experts to effectively advocate for their rights, interests and needs, integrating gender perspectives in policies, peace negotiations, and agreements.
4. Cross-pollinate ideas between WPS and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agencies to synergize shared goals and programming.

Transnational CSOs and Regional / Multilateral Governing Bodies

These organizations can build on the momentum generated by the meetings to advance Women, Peace, and Security in the Asia Pacific region by implementing the following recommendations:

1. Promote women’s success stories in peace and security matters across the region in collaboration with local and international media.
2. Encourage and monitor the adoption and implementation of WPS perspectives in local, national, and international policies either through a WPS NAP or a comprehensive gender policy.

3. Demand that governments develop plans to address the underlying gendered structures within their own systems that impede meaningful participation of women at all levels of government, peace processes, and security structures.
4. Demand that governments develop strategies to track, measure, and increase women's meaningful participation and leadership in conflict prevention, security missions, and peace processes either through a WPS NAP or a comprehensive gender policy.
5. Demand financial and other government resources for implementation of WPS principles, insist on government transparency, and hold governments accountable.
6. Cross-pollinate ideas between WPS and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agencies to synergize shared goals and programming.
7. Encourage the participation of gender-diverse, indigenous, and migrant individuals.

About CSCAP

Established in 1993, the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) is the premier Track Two organization in the Asia-Pacific region and counterpart to the Track One processes dealing with security issues, namely, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the ASEAN Defense Ministers Plus Forum. It provides an informal mechanism for scholars, officials and others in their private capacities to discuss political and security issues and challenges facing the region. It provides policy recommendations to various intergovernmental bodies, convenes regional and international meetings and establishes linkages with institutions and organizations in other parts of the world to exchange information, insights and experiences in the area of regional political-security cooperation.