Workshop

National Action Plans: Challenges and Opportunities

Summary Report

Workshop on UNSCR 1325 National Action Plans

Informal EU Taskforce on UNSCR 1325

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Marine Etablissement Amsterdam

A cooperation between the Dutch MFA, EEAS, EPLO and WO=MEN and the IIS

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Executive Summary

The United Nations Security Council has repeatedly encouraged Member States to substantiate the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security through the development of National Action Plans (NAPs). The workshop *National Action Plans: Challenges and Opportunities,* held on March 7, 2016 in Amsterdam aimed at addressing the challenges and sharing best practices around the development, implementation and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of NAPs at the European level.

Some of the main takeaways from the discussions during the event are:
- Although a lot of progress has been made since the adoption of resolution 1325 in 2000, the Women, Peace and Security agenda often lacks concrete action. Developing a NAP should therefore not be an aim in itself, but should be part of a strategy to take **concrete steps** towards the implementation of resolution 1325.
- **Bottom-up approaches** and the active involvement of local actors has proven to be essential throughout the NAP process. Women, Peace and Security issues are experienced in different ways in varying contexts. Therefore, consultation of local women and men is part and parcel of the process preceding any NAP activity or intervention undertaken in a foreign country.
- Even though the cooperation might sometimes prove challenging, **involving civil society partners** in the NAP process is valuable for all those involved. Civil society actors often have knowledge, experience and perspectives that can complement those of government officials. Furthermore, because Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are often rooted in the women's rights discourse, their inclusion can make that NAPs becomes more comprehensive and meaningful.
- **Careful planning** is likely to make the NAP process a lot easier and more efficient. Although some flexibility is required given the fragile context in which NAPs are often implemented, all actors should be well-informed of their roles and responsibilities. Developing, implementing and evaluating NAPs are all time-consuming processes. When dealing with a NAP some patience is indeed a virtue as it takes time to make sure a NAP is truly impactful.

Finally, many of the discussions showed that NAP development, implementation and evaluation is a process of '**learning by doing**'. Drafting a perfect NAP would be ideal, but, in practice, changing contexts can always call for adjustments in plans and programmes. A continuous, collective commitment to the Women, Peace and Security agenda and the NAP process will allow actors to learn best practices from one another and adjust their actions to be more effective. During the event, government and CSO representatives alike expressed their ambition to keep pushing the Women, Peace and Security agenda forward and stressed their determination to work towards even more impactful NAPs.

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Introduction

The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Taskforce for Women's Rights and Gender Equality organised and facilitated the workshop '*National Action Plans: Challenges and Opportunities'* for EU Member States and civil society organisations. The event was held on 7 March 2016 and was co-hosted by the European External Action Service (EEAS), the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), the Dutch Gender Platform WO=MEN and the Institute for Inclusive Security (IIS). The workshop aimed to provide participants with a platform to exchange knowledge and lessons learned in the development, implementation and evaluation of National Action Plans (NAPs). The challenges and opportunities of cooperation between different stakeholders was a recurring theme during the event.

Background

In 2015 the [UN Global Study on UNSCR 1325](#) reemphasised the role of NAPs as "critical tools" for UN Member States to commit themselves to the international Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. The performance of EU Member States in this regard is notable, as exemplified by the seventeen NAPs issued by EU members at the time of last year's EU-MS meeting on UNSCR 1325.

The timing of the workshop on the development, implementation and evaluation of NAPs coincided with several Member States being in the process of drafting, evaluating and/or renewing their NAP. Furthermore, there were several Member States represented that had not yet developed an NAP, and this workshop offered them an insight into the design process.

As a host, the Netherlands offered its expertise on the development and implementation of its NAP. The Dutch NAP is a partnership between government and civil society. This strategy has proven to be a powerful instrument for effective joint action. In the months leading up to the event, the signatories of the Dutch NAP committed themselves to writing the third NAP for the period of 2016-2019. [The Dutch National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security](#) was presented on March 8 2016 and subsequently signed by more than 60 organisations, including four ministries, knowledge institutions and civil society organisations.

Objectives

The workshop aimed to collectively address some of the key challenges encountered by many actors in NAP development, implementation and evaluation, and to share best practices. The workshop exposed the distinct challenges and opportunities of these phases, while also revealing that certain aspects, for instance gender analysis, inclusion of civil society, and M&E, should be considered from start to finish. By sharing experiences and ideas, the participants were able to get a better idea of which approaches for developing, implementing and evaluating NAPs are likely to lead to the desired outcomes. Countries that had not yet developed an NAP were encouraged to attend and discuss their perspectives and ideas on NAP processes. During this exchange, special attention was paid to the challenges and opportunities that arise in the cooperation between governments, civil-society, knowledge institutions and grassroots organisations.

Opening Plenary Session

The event started with a plenary introductory session hosted by *Mirjam Krijnen*, Head of the Taskforce Women's Rights and Gender Equality at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ms. Krijnen welcomed the participants and expressed her appreciation for the fact that EU Member States, EU civil-society organisations and like-minded partners were represented at the event. She stressed that working with civil society in establishing the NAP is an added value, not an aim in itself. Furthermore, she believed that an NAP should be seen as a tool for further action, and not as a goal in itself. It is important to not just 'talk the talk', but also to 'walk the walk', that is to say, it is of the essence to implement the NAP after having written it.

Mara Marinaki, Principal Advisor on Gender and Implementation of UNSCR 1325 at the European External Action Service, started her statement by expressing her desire to make International Women's Day (March 8) redundant. After all, there should not have to be a special day only once a year dedicated to women as a special interest group.

With regards to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, especially on the UN Women "heforShe" campaign with the engagement of male leaders to promote WPS, she believed it to be important to engage them also after the cameras have left the room; concrete strategies should be implemented. In this respect, 2015 was a good year with a confluence of important international decisions aiming to strengthen the role of Women and Girls, such as Agenda 2030, UNSCR1325 15th anniversary Review, and the Women's Summit where concrete pledges were made by heads of states and governments to promote concrete measures in order to improve gender equality and women´s empowerment in their countries.

In spite of the long history and notable impact of UNSCR 1325, it is still necessary to keep people on their toes and keep pushing them to continue their efforts. This is where the Civil Society Organisation (CSO) partners come in. In many ways, the intention to implement NAPs is there, but the action is still missing.

EU Member States are farther ahead than most. The EU was one of the first regional cooperations to adopt a regional NAP in 2008. However, two out of five EU Member States still do not have an NAP. Exchanging experiences and best practices is a good way for those lagging behind to be able to catch up. Ms. Marinaki pointed out that the event fitted into this bigger picture.

She also stressed the importance of EU and NATO joining their efforts when it comes to hybrid-threats. Women, Peace and Security is not only to be promoted externally; WPS has become increasingly relevant to domestic policies (within the EU context). Migration, terrorism, extremism, cybercrime and other such challenges are all parameters in which the role of women should be properly integrated. Unfortunately, a lot has been overlooked in the past years, the most relevant case in point being Syria. Important is the extent to which women are allowed to contribute to peace negotiations: the inclusion of women should be more than just a numbers game.

Ms. Marinaki ended her opening address by expressing that it is not only the Ministries of Foreign Affairs that hold a key role within NAPs, but that all ministries should feel a shared sense of ownership and should be actively involved. In this respect, domestic policies and the different angles of national administration should be analysed and engaged.

Workshop Sessions

The opening session was followed by three parallel workshops in which participants discussed best practice and avenues of cooperation on NAP development, implementation and evaluation.

Workshop NAP Development

Even though the key responsibility for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 lies with the Member States of the United Nations, there is a strong added value in working in partnership with civil society. When developing an NAP, the input of civil society organisations can be very useful in making one's NAP meaningful and comprehensive. Cooperation between government and civil society can be challenging, but at the same time it offers opportunities to complement each other's expertise. This workshop covered some best practices in civil society engagement in the process of NAP development at the domestic level. It was also discussed how stakeholders can create valuable links with civil society in the global south.

> This workshop was facilitated by *Anne Kwakkenbos*, coordinator NAP 1325 at [WO=MEN](), the Dutch Gender Platform. WO=MEN is an network in which various development organisations, gender and women's rights organisations, entrepreneurs, academic institutions and activists work together. The platform is committed to equal rights for women and men all over the world. They do this by enhancing knowledge exchange and knowledge development, and lobbying and advocacy targeted at politicians and policymakers (including members of parliament and the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Education, Culture and Science). Themes are: gender, peace and security, and sustainable economic development. They focus on influencing Dutch policy and politics and promoting gender justice worldwide.

Opening

The workshop started with a presentation by *Mavic Cabrera-Balleza*, International Coordinator at the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders. Some of the key points she raised in her presentation were:
- Localisation of NAPs from the 'get go' is crucial for good implementation.
- None of the NAPs published to this day have made use of the indicators presented to the Security Council in 2010.
- Reporting should be harmonised: use CEDAW's General Recommendation No. 30 guidelines on monitoring and reporting.
- Stand-alone NAPs are by no means bad, but the integrative aspect should not be overlooked in the sense that the NAP should not come 'out of the blue'. It is important to look at what programmes/legislation/policy are already in place and can complement the NAP, rather than reinventing the wheel.
- A 'whole government approach' is required for a good NAP. It is essential to ask what an NAP will mean for the different ministries.

After this, *Hanaa Edwar-Busha*, General Secretary of the Iraqi Al-Amal Association, told the participants about the NAP development process in Iraq. The NAP was adopted in 2014, being the first country in the Arab-world to adopt one. The initiative was started by civil

society together with the European Feminist Initiative. She explained how Iraq's NAP is an example of an internally focused NAP.

Unfortunately, the implementation of an emergency plan was necessary in Iraq shortly after the launch of NAP I. Changes to the NAP were made in response to the changed environment in Iraq (IS, IDPs). Side-effects of the changed environment included weakened government institutions such as the security and defence ministries, which were supposed to be involved with the NAP and the national reconciliation processes. The Ministry for Women (established in 2004) was invited to the Operation Room in 2015. Later that year, the government disbanded the ministry, leaving no mechanism for the implementation of the NAP 1325 within the emergency plan.

The speaker together with the organisation she represents, hopes for the NAP to be integrated into national reconciliation efforts, ensuring women are included in this process. However, in order to start national reconciliation, social cohesion needs to be built between communities. She believed that addressing and accepting diversity is a necessary first step to an equal citizenship state.

Open Discussion

During the open discussion that followed, the participants exchanged their views and experiences with NAP development. Some of the most important points raised during this discussion were:

- Various member state representatives expressed their interest in cooperating with civil society in the NAP process. Participants that had experience with this CSO involvement indicated that it was important to **start preparations for such an engagement early on**. In addition to this, it is essential to clearly **outline the goals and roles** that different stakeholders have in such partnerships. CSO participants added to this that **joint analysis** by government and CSOs is desirable for an effective NAP.
- Participants indicated that **bottom-up approaches** and **localisation** have proven to be effective in developing and implementing NAPs. As such it is advisable to **include local CSOs in the development** of such a plan. CSO participants encouraged member states to **make local needs and priorities drive the agenda**. Various member state representatives agreed with this and pointed out that recent NAPs are more focused on country-engagement and that governments aim to create conditions for local women's organisations to take the reins. Other member states had conducted consultations in focus-countries to get a better sense of local needs and priorities.
- Some member state participants wondered how NAP development can be coordinated most efficiently within the government. Others responded that it is important to **involve multiple ministries** while clearly **defining each department's roles and responsibilities**. For example, in selecting focus countries, criteria can be defined so that the focus countries are relevant for all ministries involved, with one ministry retaining the final say.

- CSO participants pointed out that there is a **lack of sufficient financial resources**. This is an important factor to take into account when selecting the countries outward-looking NAP are focusing on. One example of this is the need for more resources to be dedicated to conflict prevention to guarantee a more sustainable peace. Without addressing the root causes of conflict, countries are likely to relapse into conflict quite easily. Member states participants emphasised that a **clear target** and a specific set of **focus countries** in the NAP can be an effective method to cope with budgetary constraints.
- CSO participants wondered how to balance their roles as watchdogs of government activities and partner in development and implementation. Others suggested **shadow reporting** as an effective tool. CSOs can also **cooperate and communicate outside the consortium** drafting the NAP. This enables CSO to strategically come into a unified position.

In the second part of the workshop the participants were split up into groups representing CSOs and governments. Each group was asked to define their strengths and challenges in the context of NAP development. Below is a selection of the responses that were mentioned by the groups.

CSO Strengths and Challenges

Strengths:

- Knowledge and experience in working on women's rights issues
- High level of commitment to the cause
- Connection/'rootedness' to the realities on the ground
- Non-partisanship/not as vulnerable to political volatility
- Diverse perspectives
- Capacity to mobilise

Challenges:

- Lack of financial resources and, thus, dependence on, for instance, government
- Possible clashes due to diverse perspectives within CSOs
- Diminishing democratic space for CSOs; the power of CSOs is considered to be a threat in many countries
- New players, such as the private sector, are joining the field: how can CSOs work with them? How can they be held accountable?
- Physical dangers in the field

Government Strengths and Challenges

Strengths:

- Financial resources
- Decision-making power and influence
    - Can set the agenda
    - Has power to implement some of the recommendations of CSOs

- Has power to push for the inclusion of women in peace processes
    - A network covering all sectors (national governments, international governments, CSOs, multilateral organisations etc.)
    - Receives regular training on UNSCR 1325 and related issues

Challenges:

- Bureaucracy
- Varying levels of expertise; diplomats as 'generalists'
- Limited human resources
- Multiple priorities (leading to a lack of depth in topic); need to focus on the broader picture
- Political correctness

Government – CSO Links

On the basis of these challenges and opportunities the group identified a number of issues where governments and CSOs could support each other. One link that was noted is the 'non-partisanship' of CSOs (strength) versus the challenging 'political correctness' that is experienced by government officials. Although it may sometimes prove to be a challenge during cooperation, governments may benefit from the non-partisanship of CSOs. For instance, their advocacy is less limited than that of government representatives. Moreover, the CSOs local influence is also likely to be more diverse.

Another link is that of the limited financial resources available to CSOs and the role of governments as financiers. This relationship can be tricky as governments are politically limited in the financial resources they can allocate, while there is a high demand for those resources. However, by closely cooperating with each other in this way, government and civil society could make the allocated resources more impactful.

Finally, CSOs noted the challenges of working with new actors (such as the private sector) while governments already have a long history of working with many of these actors. In this way, governments can put CSOs in contact with reliable, new partners that can support them in attaining their goals. These links could result in more (non-governmental) resources being allocated to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and for more influential and relevant actors to be involved in women's rights advocacy.

Workshop NAP Implementation

The implementation workshop brought together representatives of CSOs and EU Member States to lay out the challenges experienced in the implementation of their respective NAPs, to exchange good practices and lessons learned, and to identify innovative ways to successfully deliver on the Women, Peace and Security agenda. A majority of participants came from European countries that are in their second or third NAP implementation cycle. Therefore, numerous concrete examples were provided and participants were able to share their experiences and the concrete challenges faced during the NAP processes.

This workshop was co-organized by the European External Action Service and the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), and moderated by Ms. Irina Bratosin D'Almeida, EPLO Senior Associate on Gender, Peace and Security. EPLO is the independent civil society platform of European NGOs, NGO networks and Think Tanks which are committed to peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict. EPLO aims to influence the EU so that it promotes and implements measures which lead to sustainable peace between states and peoples and within states, and which transform and resolve conflicts non-violently. EPLO disseminates information and promotes understanding of EU policies of concern to its member organisations. Next to that, EPLO raises awareness about the contribution the EU should make to peacebuilding and the need to hold the EU accountable to its own political commitments of helping secure peace

Opening: Implementation Challenges

In the introductory round both government and civil society representatives acknowledged that, in spite of the efforts and the achievements made to date, several challenges hamper the NAPs ability to deliver value-added to those in need:

- In spite of most European NAPs being outward looking, (women) peacebuilding organisations from conflict-affected countries are not always meaningfully involved in the development or implementation of NAPs. Therefore, too often NAPs continue to be developed and implemented without a thorough understanding of the local realities.
- Both CSO and government representatives often have to deal with limited to no budget and human resources that are dedicated to the implementation of the NAPs. Especially in government, the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda brings together many actors and policy frameworks with different budget lines and priorities. This requires a significant degree of cross-sectorial coordination and collaboration.
- The implementation of UNSCR 1325 and of NAPs overall remains a bureaucratic process. Hence, the dominant indicator system for many NAPs continues to be quantitative. Although this framework makes it easier to show the programmatic work that is being done, it fails to provide meaningful impact assessments. Consequently, it remains difficult to see where the NAPs are a real added value to local women communities.
- The lack of meaningful and sustained involvement of CSOs into the NAP development, implementation and M&E processes leads to decreased advocacy efforts around this issue at national, regional as well as at the international level.

- Oftentimes the term gender is used interchangeably with women. This leads to an oversight of underlying gender dynamics in conflict(s) and how NAPs could address these. There is a great push to involve more men and boys to promote the Women, Peace and Security agenda but CSOs and policy makers alike are still struggling to see what that means in practice.
- UNSCR 1325 is a political agenda given its adoption by the UN Security Council. Significant reasons exist to keep it part of this political framework, not least because its power comes from its location within the highest international security body. However, fifteen years after the adoption of the resolution, implementation still lags behind. Participants argued this might be at least partially due to the a-political way in which UNSCR 1325 is implemented. The agenda might need to be re-politicised, and annual debates on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in national assemblies might be one way to do so.
- Both government and CSO participants called for caution with regards to the on-going discussions to expand the Women, Peace and Security agenda to incorporate other 'hot' issues, such as migration or CVE. Such issues might be important, but it should be carefully addressed whether these issues should always be dealt with within the Women, Peace and Security framework.

<u>Best Practices</u>

It was agreed as well that, in spite of shortcomings, NAPs continue to be the best way to further the implementation of international commitments on Women, Peace and Security. They provide a framework for action and, if well designed, also arrange monitoring and review mechanisms. Several best practices have been highlighted, drawing on national experiences from around the table that contribute to the successful implementation of NAPs:

Localisation: One of the government participants stated: 'nothing about them without them', referring to the importance of NAP localisation. It is essential to ensure that a diversity of views is integrated into the NAP development and implementation process when working with local communities. Therefore, the third Dutch NAP focuses on country-level and context-specific engagement by putting country-groups at the centre of its NAP implementation process. Mindful that change at local level needs to be driven by the local population, and that local (women) organisations are the agents of change, the Dutch government set-out to provide these actors of change with the circumstances and the conditions in which they can best contribute to their communities.

Inclusivity: Ireland's NAP is a good example of a comprehensive and inclusive policy tool that expresses a strong commitment to engage CSOs throughout its 5 pillars, 48 actions and 73 indicators. A learning process involving CSOs and women from Northern Ireland, Timor Leste and Kenya guided its inception. The NAP has a monitoring framework and the monitoring group includes 50% CSO representatives.

Inward looking: Two NAPs stand out as good examples for integrating an inward looking element into their efforts to implement UNSCR 1325. First of all, Ireland's NAP is among the only EU NAPs that is also inward looking and includes, for example, actions that support women from conflict areas living in Ireland. Secondly, as a result of intense advocacy by civil society organisations, the third Swiss NAP also includes an inward looking goal (no. 5)

that aims to mainstream UNSCR 1325 in the federal administration and ensure greater accountability and strengthened M&E systems for its implementation. This is to be achieved, among other things, through the recurrent monitoring of the NAP implementation and through the publication of an annual progress report.

Think early: To allow all interested stakeholders to meaningfully contribute, it is important that thinking and consultation processes are started at an early stage. As a good example, the United Kingdom has already commissions several studies in preparation for the development of their fourth NAP, which is to start only in 2018.

Transparency: Several governments, including Ireland and the UK have paved the way for increased transparency in the review and evaluation of NAPs by publishing the mid-term and final evaluation of their respective NAPs. Greater transparency fosters a culture of accountability and also allows other governments/CSOs to draw on the lessons identified.

Finally, it was acknowledged that a solid gender analysis of the country context is systematically lacking in NAPs. While gender analysis takes time and resources, it helps design effective interventions. Many of the current programmes and projects focused on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 are built around assumptions about women's needs. As one participant noted "just because governmental or non-governmental actors work with women in the field of peace and security, does not mean that this is helping the implementation of UNSCR 1325".

Gender Analysis

A solid gender analysis should be an integral part of all country and conflict analyses. It should be rooted in the local community context and it should take into consideration that:

- **Gender does not equal women:** it is important, but not sufficient, to explore women's experiences, roles and needs in a conflict. A gender perspective requires looking at systems of power and gendered power relations to understand how institutions are gendered.
- **Women are not a homogenous group:** there are wide variations in the experiences of women and men that need to be understood in order to develop truly inclusive and effective interventions. For example, on could include women from both rural and urban communities, indigenous but also Christian and Muslim communities and other religious identities in programmes.
- **Context and needs are important:** a good gender-sensitive conflict analysis looks at the links between gender and conflict, the underlying gender dynamics, and their links to peace and security.
- **Process matters:** the design, implementation and follow-up of an analysis are as important as the questions for analysis. The meaningful participation of different people in the analysis process will determine the nature and value of the resulting analysis. Reflecting on one's own or organisational gender identities and norms can also reveal assumptions, which may play out in the analysis process.

Opportunities

In terms of the opportunities to improve implementation, participants highlighted several possible avenues for future action:

- Governments should strive to adopt a whole-of-government approach for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and provide high-level political support to this agenda. Next to that, there is a need to ensure that the WPS agenda is positioned in a department where it does not only fit ideologically, but where it also has the means to deliver and the financial resources to be implemented.
- CSOs are important stakeholders for the development and implementation of NAPs and should be engaged in the NAP process in a meaningful way. Local CSOs from conflict-affected areas should be involved in the implementation of NAPs (especially when country strategies are developed). It is also important to ensure a diversity of views is taken into consideration when working with such local CSOs.
- Capacitate government representatives to implement the agenda and provide guidance on how to do gender sensitive conflict analysis.
- Create a theory of change to assess how one's organisation is going to contribute to the Women, Peace and Security agenda.
- Commission impact analyses of selected projects and programmes to show how, if at all, funding and support enhanced equality and promoted local (women) organisations.
- Consider using the NAP also as a strategic policy-planning document to foster change in your own administration, to encourage others to implement this agenda and to use it to secure (various types of) funding to implement UNSCR 1325 throughout all external actions.
- Ensure that the Women, Peace and Security agenda is integrated into mainstream policies and analysis.
- Enhance cooperation and collaboration among EU Member States and the EU using the framework of the EU informal Task Force for the implementation of UNSCR 1325, capitalising on the shared experience to reduce costs and increase efficiency.

Workshop NAP Monitoring and Evaluation

Many states that already have a NAP find monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of activities to be a challenging aspect of the NAP process. All stakeholders desire activities that produce meaningful outcomes, and there is an increasing demand for the reporting of results. Unfortunately, measuring results, especially quantitatively, can be a daunting task. It is of crucial importance to integrate a framework for monitoring and evaluating progress into NAPs. Furthermore, the corresponding implementation of evaluation will demand all actors to consider carefully evaluation activities from the very start of each project.

> This workshop was facilitated by Ms. Angelic Young, Senior Coordinator for National Action Plans at the Institute for Inclusive Security. Inclusive Security's bold goal is to change the international security paradigm. Sustainable peace is possible only when those who shape policy include women and other affected groups in the prevention and transformation of violent conflict. The Institute for Inclusive Security intends to build a community—from government, civil society, and beyond—that shares a commitment to building stability through inclusive policies and practices. With its National Action Plan Resource Center it intends to build upon and share the tremendous contributions of other pioneers. It's also intended to be a hub for learning new strategies, sharing successes and challenges, and easily finding not just information, but also useful analysis and tools.

Opening: M&E Challenges

The session began with an exercise for all participants on the challenges of NAP evaluation. Participants were asked to indicate which of various evaluation challenges described by the facilitator resonated most strongly with them. Challenges included:

- The changes we are trying to measure are too difficult to evaluate
- Evaluation is an overly complicated process that must be done by an outside expert
- Evaluation is a one-time event done only to demonstrate success or failure of a program
- It is difficult to collect data in hostile environments
- Evaluation is time-consuming and generates lots of useless data

Many participants indicated that the first of the abovementioned challenges was one they identified with. Participants indicated that to measure progress on the Women, Peace and Security agenda, they had to measure perceptions or intangible changes in a cultural or normative environment. The facilitator indicated that by using a bit more creativity in measurement, it is almost always possible to measure some change. For instance, in some cases the solution for this problem is to **use scales.** Another example is the **use of proxy indicators**.

Then the facilitator went on to address the abovementioned challenges. She explained that evaluations should not only be a one-time event (proving success or failure of a program). Programs are not static – they are **continuous**, and therefore evaluations should be, as well. Moreover, when seen only as a means of proving success or failure, evaluations can be politicized. The reality is that the purpose of evaluation is to **provide information to implementers**; to help them **learn** and then use that information to **improve or refine programs**, or **amplify, leverage or even duplicate successes**.

Evaluations do not have to be overly complicated, nor do they always require outside expertise. The only prerequisite is a commitment to investigating the programs workings and impact.

Finally the facilitator indicated that although it can be expensive, engaging an outside expert has a variety of advantages such as **neutrality and independence**. Internal evaluations can be effective too but generally have some shortcomings. A third option is to do a **participatory evaluation** and engage an expert to help evaluate one's programs internally. In these cases there is an external consultant with the expertise, but the evaluation is performed in cooperation with the government, and thus they are learning how to evaluate themselves at the same time.

High-Impact NAPs

After discussing the challenges, the facilitator introduced Inclusive Security's high-impact NAP framework and walked through each "model" outcome. This framework consists of the following *outcomes*:
1. Meaningful participation of women in peace and security processes is attained
2. Women's contribution to peace and security is affirmed
3. Women's human security is achieved

With as its *midterm outcomes*:
1.1 Key laws and policies allow for more participation in governance, security sector, peace processes, relief & recovery
1.2 Women have the capacity to participate in governance, security sector, peace processes, relief & recovery
1.3 Women's representation increases in governance, security sector, peace processes, relief & recovery

2.1 Society's perception towards women improve
2.2 Key influencers/leaders demonstrate commitment to advancing women's inclusion

3.1 Barriers to equality are removed
3.2 Women exercise their rights

Open Discussion

Then participants were asked to share their experiences on NAP development, implementation and evaluation processes. It was discussed whether EU Member States should strive for commonality of indicators across their M&E frameworks. Although moving to a wholly common framework of indicators could make data collection and aggregation easier, it was generally accepted that it would be good for each country to have separate indicators. This allows countries to set their **own priorities** in addressing Women, Peace and Security (also domestically) and at the same time it offers an opportunity to **compare the strengths of different indicators**. After all, simply copying indicators is not helpful, whereas sharing experiences can create a strong collective learning process.

Participants indicated that the participatory workshop-like way of doing an evaluation could be interesting compared to just having an external evaluator doing the M&E work. After all,

this allows the government officials to take part in the **learning process** and actually experience themselves which indicators or targets might have to be adjusted. The facilitator added to this that creating a good M&E plan is a very useful tool to further minimise the experienced challenges.

Outcomes and M&E Plans

Then the session turned to the topic of outcomes and outcome-level indicators. The facilitator shared an exercise from Inclusive Security's curriculum module on monitoring and evaluating NAPs. Here, participants worked with the fictional country of Impactland to determine what outcomes and outcome level indicators might work best for its NAP. This fuelled a discussion about how narrow or broad an outcome ought to be to be most useful. The more abstract high-level outcomes may seem more meaningful, but also can be a lot harder to measure. At the same time participants agreed that a long report full of data, without having a clear explanatory framework is not a desirable situation either.

The second part of the session began with a discussion about the importance of creating a monitoring and evaluation plan. The facilitator started with a quick interactive exercise where she gave each participant one "step" from the process of creating an M&E system for a NAP and asked them to line up in what they thought the correct order of steps would be. Participants found that developing a monitoring and evaluation plan should address a number of things depending on your priorities:

- How are you going to communicate goals?
- What information is useful? Only successes or failures as well?
- Are you only going to report within the organization or also communicate it to the outside?
- If you are going to communicate, what kind of communication will you use?

Participants further discussed the extent to which some steps (e.g., collecting data) overlap with others or are parts of a continuous process.

Participatory Evaluation and Reporting

From there, the session shifted back into a conversation about participatory monitoring and evaluation, and how it can be beneficial to be more "inclusive" with evaluation from both a resource and learning standpoint.

Because of their strengths it can be beneficial to bring CSOs in when developing an M&E system. At the same time government and CSOs often prove to have different expectations, also when it comes to evaluation. It is therefore essential to clearly define goals and processes in as a way to manage mutual expectations.

Participants discussed to what extent it is necessary to always publish a report about the collected monitoring and evaluation data. Publishing a report requires a very high amount of information and data to be gathered. Therefore, the entire process often turns out to be quite time-consuming and inefficient. Not all the data that one collects should *per se* be published in a report that goes to the outside world. At the same time, the process of institutionalizing ideas is valuable. Hence, it is necessary to carefully consider whether and when one wants to publish a report and what it should be about.

With regard to both evaluation and reporting it is essential to make a clear commitment from the very start, and actually act upon that commitment. Especially in the case of NAP evaluations by external actors, it is important to make sure that these are properly planned. If one has sufficient resources, it might be advisable to bring an external evaluator into the organization to support the evaluation process. External evaluators can function as facilitator, but also bring in a little objectivity. If a government or government-CSO partnership is evaluating itself, it is likely that they will (sometimes unconsciously) be looking for the good stories.

Closing Plenary Session

NAPs, Counter Terrorism and Counter Violent Extremism

Isabelle Geuskens, Executive Director of the [Women Peacemakers Programme](#), began the session by asking the audience whether they agreed or disagreed with the following four statements:

1. It's important to focus on gender and countering violent extremism, mainly because women are victims; they face sexual abuse from extremist parties.
2. The best approach when including a gender perspective in violent extremism is a programme working through mothers, as they are witnessing radicalization in their communities.
3. Counterterrorism measures are helping make the world safer for women.
4. The merging of the Women, Peace and Security, and countering violent extremism agendas means that women become further instrumentalised.

The responses from the audience showed that participants felt that there was quite some friction between, on the one hand counter terrorism and counter violent extremism measures, and on the other hand the Women, Peace and Security agenda. At the same time, many participants recognised that actions need to be taken against terrorism and violent extremism.

Ms. Geuskens outlined the risk that counter terrorism initiatives operating on community-level, often do not consult local women and their groups, because when actors approach the leaders of communities, these are often men. In addition to that, during these consultations there is a risk that only voices in the formal sphere are heard, in accordance with local norms, excluding the voices of women, which often are active in the informal sphere. This situation becomes even more worrisome when the voices in the formal sphere actively work against women civil society and women's rights.

She also underlined that including women in any effort around CVE/ CTM should be done with care and sensitivity. There is a need to take into consideration any negative effects the inclusion of women in these efforts could have when this is done from an instrumental point of view. Directly and indirectly, women's work for peace and women's/human rights contributes to inclusive, fair and resilient societies. It needs to be supported in its own right – from a women's and human rights perspective.

When this is not taken into account, women's explicit involvement could put them at risk, as it can foster foster distrust within their communities. Also, the nature of women's organisations themselves makes them particularly vulnerable, as they are often smaller organizations working on sensitive issues, which challenges (local) power interests.

The reality on the ground is changing fast: Many, including women's NGOs are facing a shrinking space for their civil society activism. In (post-)conflict situations, CSOs are even more limited if, for example, counterterrorism measures make it difficult for them to receive their funding as banking transfers are delayed, halted or stopped. Also, some governments are changing NGO legislation, restricting the receipt of foreign funding (labelling those NGOs

that do so as "foreign agents"). Finally, women's CSOs often also become targets for extremists; as their peace and women's rights work goes directly against extremists' ideologies and interests.

Ms. Geuskens ended her speech by sharing feedback she received on this topic from actors in the field:

- There is a shrinking space for civil society organisations that needs to be addressed.
- There is a lot of pressure from governments to focus on CVE activities. As a result, there is a risk that community-based, rights-based activism and interventions are becoming (re-)labelled as CVE, because they are otherwise not taken seriously and/or will get insufficient funding. Sometimes donors even label activities as CVE without the implementer being aware of it. This can pose risks for the local activism and rights-based work, as it can lead to the community questioning CSO's agendas; which ultimately undermines community trust.
- NGOs have to increasingly apply to calls for proposals under a CVE framework. Governments are working closely with INGOs that want to work on CVE. With CVE becoming a trend, small organisations such as women's groups, doing important prevention and rights-based work on the ground, find it increasingly hard to get direct access to funding for their women's rights and peace work.
- Critical CSOs are finding it harder to do their work; with countries coming up with strict NGO regulations - which they often do under the banner that they need to monitor the CSO sector to prevent terrorism financing. This particularly hits CSOs working on HR issues, e.g. the rights of prisoners.

Then the floor was given to *Marriët Schuurman,* NATO Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security. She explained that it is important to find links between national issues and strategies, and CVE measures. With peace and security issues increasingly also being a problem within Europe itself, governments should 'bring the Women, Peace and Security agenda home'.

She therefore recommended governments take a comprehensive approach in designing strategies against radicalisation. In her opinion, this entails gender equality and women's rights have to be core business for any security adviser. This also means that there is a need for comprehensive analyses in a security context. Gender sensitive analyses of all actors within security issues are required. In addition to this, Ms. Schuurman advocated for a larger focus on participation and prevention in radicalisation strategies.

To set in motion changes around the Women, Peace and Security agenda, a change in mind-set will be necessary. One way to achieve this change is by fostering inclusive leadership. Ms. Schuurman listed three critical elements to achieve this:

- Promote transparency and accountability:
  External and internal mechanisms to promote transparency and accountability are necessary. Governments and organisations should set targets for inclusivity and make sure they meet them. Having such a strategy is likely to create peer pressure and thereby speed-up the process.
- Build coalitions/partnerships for change:

Governments, CSOs, international organizations etc. can cooperate to promote change around the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Gender needs to be increasingly placed at the core of shared strategies.
- Start 'at home' and create practical tools for day-to-day work:
When there are gendered issues not being addressed 'at home', it takes away the legitimacy an actor has when promoting the Women, Peace and Security agenda in partner countries. This has to do with credibility and core values: you cannot defend values you do not live.

The floor was opened for comments and questions from the audience. Some of the questions asked were:

- What is the interplay between human rights and security communities in the WPS context?
- How can one address the challenge of (unintentionally) aligning oneself with Islamophobic discourse when contributing to CVE?
- CSO women's organisations are getting told that money is being diverted to the immigration crisis in Europe. People follow the money, but there is a need to invest in the strengthening of local populations. Do you recognise this within the donor community?

Ms. Schuurman responded to the first question by stating that within NATO, conceptually, there are not two separate spheres when it comes to security and human rights. She explained that gender equality is integrated in all areas. With regards to the second question she believed that it is critical to build long-term relationship with partners integrated into Islamic culture to show that CT and CVE are not anti-Islam.

Joris Geeven, Coordinator of the Women, Peace and Security agenda within the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, explained that governments realise that the situation for women's organisations in particular is getting more and more difficult. However, after all the austerity measures in development budgets, the Dutch budget for gender equality and women's rights has remained the same. Given that budget allocation is based on political decisions, it is often worthwhile for civil society to influence the political sphere when it comes to financial resources.

Appendix I: List of Participants

First name	Last Name	Organisation/Country
Henry	Abbink	Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (editor of report)
Teresa Paraskevi	Angelatou	Greek embassy in the Hague
Sahla	Aroussi	Coventry University
Cristina	Bădin	Romanian Embassy in The Hague
Ian	Bailey	UK Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Teresa	Balanzat Meirás	Spanish Ministry of Defence
Gesa	Bent	Independent Consultant
Irina	Bratosin D'Almeida	European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO)
Hetty	Burgman	Cordaid
Mavic	Balleza	Global Network for Women Peacebuilders (GNWP)
Colin	Cogitore	European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO)
Anne-Floor	Dekker	WO=MEN
Luisa	Del Turco	European Network for Civil Peace Service (ENCPS)
Iris	van der Does	Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Hanaa	Edwar	Al-Amal Association
Joris	Geeven	Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Isabelle	Geuskens	Women Peacemakers Program (WPP)
An	Ghys	Belgian Ministy of Foreign Affairs
Laurence	Gilllois	UN Women Brussels
Verena	Gräfin von Roedern	German embassy in the Hague
Gonda	de Haan	ICCO & Kerk in Actie
Sara	Haapalainen	Finish 1325 Network
James	Hamilton Harding	UK Government - Stabilisation Unit
Jennifer	Hawkins	US Aid
Jürgen	Heissel	Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
James	Kelly	Irish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Anke	Kluppels	PAX
Mirjam	Krijnen	Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Anne	Kwakkenbos	WO=MEN

Emeline	Laurens	French Ministry of Foreign Affairs
José	Lorenzo Outón	Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mara	Marinaki	European External Action Service (EEAS)
Karen	McMinn Gonzalez	Independent consultant
Jana	Naujoks	International Alert
Emma	Nilenfors	Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Christiane	van Ophem	Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (editor of report)
Nicola	Orlando	Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Corrie	Oudhoff	Multicultural Women Peacemakers Network (MWPN)
Stefan	Peterfi	Romanian embassy in the Hague
Blake	Peterson	US Department of State
Martin	Pizinger	Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Annemarie	Sancar	Swisspeace
Ina	Schaafsma	Danish embassy in the Hague
Marriët	Schuurman	NATO
Elisabeth	van der Steenhoven	WO=MEN
Darko	Stilinović	Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ted L.E.	von Meijenfeldt	Platform Women & Sustainable Peace (VDV)
Ann-Sofie	Stude	Finish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Dewi	Suralaga	Cordaid
Elise	Thoen	European External Action Service (EEAS)
Sanne	Tielemans	Conciliation Resources
Lubomir	Todorov	Bulgarian embassy in the Hague
Han	Verhoeven	Management for Development Foundation (MDF)
Maja	Vitas Majstorovic	Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)
Deborah	Wright	Oxfam Novib
Angelic	Young	The Institute for Inclusive Security
Masooma	Yousufzai	Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs