

Spain

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Overview

Spain's national action plan (NAP) for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 was approved by the Council of Ministers on 31 November 2007. It highlights the need to promote women as indispensable actors in peacebuilding processes, conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction activities. It also underlines the role of human rights defenders and the importance of the participation of Spanish civil society. It takes a comprehensive approach, including references to development, security, peace negotiations and political participation.

The NAP also defines four levels of implementation: (1) national; (2) European; (3) North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE); and (4) UN. It includes specific references to European Union (EU) action by highlighting Spain's contribution to the appointment and promotion of more women in European Security and Defence Policy¹ (ESDP) missions and operations, and to EU development co-operation. Finally, the NAP also includes some inward-looking elements focused mainly on raising awareness on gender, peace and security-related (GPS) issues among the general population through education programmes and support to civil society activities on GPS.

Overall, the NAP is quite ambitious but it faces a number of major implementation challenges, including the lack of a clear timetable and the lack of a dedicated budget.

When the NAP was adopted in 2007, gender policies were high on the political agenda and a number of legislative measures were taken on issues related to gender equality and participation. However, in the last five years, women's rights in Spain have been dramatically reduced and gender issues have been considered irrelevant in the political arena. The severity of the situation was exemplified by the fact that in 2015, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) made several recommendations to counterbalance the loss of women's rights). At the same time, the status of the NAP has been marginalised and very few activities have been implemented following the reduction of resources and the changed political context.

The situation changed dramatically in 2015 when Spain was elected to the UNSC and held the Presidency during the 15th Anniversary of UNSCR 1325. Spain's international work on GPS at the UN paved the way for some changes in its domestic policies and the Spanish government undertook to develop a new NAP in consultation with civil society organisations (CSOs) and to include lessons learned from other countries such as the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (UK).

Design

The development of the NAP was predominantly a governmental initiative. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MFA) led the process with the involvement of the Agency for International Co-operation for Development (AECID), the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education and Science, and the Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs. The Spanish office of the United Nations Development Fund for Women² (UNIFEM) also played an important role in the design of the NAP. However, CSOs were not involved.

At the same time as it was developing the NAP, the MFA also developed a gender and

¹ This is now called the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

² This is now called the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

peacebuilding strategy for development co-operation. Therefore, in 2008, the Spanish government decided to prepare a separate action plan on gender and peacebuilding in development co-operation led by AECID (which is also part of the MFA). The government commissioned the Instituto de Estudios sobre Conflictos y Acción Humanitaria ([IECAH](#)) to produce the first draft of this action plan which was subsequently discussed and commented on by CSOs and peace research centres. Following these discussions, a number of consultative meetings were held between ministerial representatives, CSOs and other gender, development and peacebuilding experts. Although CSOs from conflict-affected countries were not formally consulted, an exchange of ideas and analysis was undertaken with a number of organisations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT).

The adoption of two different action plans was dysfunctional and indicative of a lack of coordination between the different ministries involved. An inter-ministerial group was responsible for the overall MFA NAP whereas the 'Action Plan: Women and Peacebuilding in Spanish Cooperation' was coordinated by AECID. The AECID-led action plan is focused on development co-operation in conflict-affected countries, but in most countries it was largely ignored. In the years since their adoption, there does not appear to have been much convergence between the two action plans.

An inter-ministerial working group was created to follow up on the implementation of the MFA NAP. The aim of the working group was to monitor NAP implementation and produce an annual report on the achievements and remaining challenges. However, the monitoring report was not based on a clearly-defined methodology for collecting data and other information, nor did it include any indicators. Since 2007, only four monitoring reports have been produced and they are, for the most part, summaries of NAP-related activities.

The development co-operation Action Plan included the aim 'to establish mechanisms of coordination with civil society to exchange information concerning actions carried out with respect to Resolution 1325'. However, this exchange of information has been limited to inviting CSOs to comment on draft documents in a very short time frame. Since the Spanish government does not provide any support for civil society coordination on women, peace and security-related (WPS) issues, it is very difficult for CSOs to make proposals. Furthermore, since no financial support is available for increasing civil society participation in WPS-related activities, most of the work undertaken by CSOs has been at CSOs own expenses.

Substantive participation in the NAP design process requires transparency in terms of access to information and adequate institutional support. Since no projects are currently foreseen on supporting education and research in peacebuilding in Spain, or promoting civil society participation in international forums or in other peacebuilding initiatives, it is essential for the Spanish government to establish more structured civil society consultation. Although they are key players in ensuring the implementation of UNSCR 1325, CSOs' experience and knowledge are neither drawn upon in the overall implementation process nor in the specific work of preparing monitoring reports, therefore CSOs produced several shadow reports

Implementation

There have been three historical moments in the NAP implementation process:

1. The Spanish government championed GPS-related issues in both the national and international arenas. This resulted in the development of the NAP.
2. Gender policies become irrelevant and there is a regression in women's rights in Spain. The NAP is forgotten.
3. Spain's presidency of the UNSC during the 15th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 provides new opportunities. Work starts on the development of a new NAP.

The Spanish government champions GPS-related issues

The NAP provided a window of opportunity for the adoption of gender-sensitive laws and for an increase in the budget devoted to gender-related issues. In 2007, Parliament adopted a

law on equality between women and men. Between 2004 and 2008, there was a significant increase in budgets for gender-related activities and Spain ranked second in the world amongst donors in the gender and development sector. All of these elements were conducive to the NAP's creation.

The NAP had a major boost in 2009-2010. The tenth anniversary of UNSCR 1325 provided the impetus for many activities, especially in terms of field missions on development co-operation and peacebuilding. A gender approach was integrated into transitional justice projects, training programmes on gender and peacebuilding were implemented in institutions responsible for peacekeeping operations, support was given to African regional organisations, including the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) for their work on women and peacebuilding, and support was given to conflict-affected countries for specific programmes aimed at institutionalising early warning systems.

The Ministry of Defence actively implemented the NAP. The Centre for Equality developed various training activities and promoted women participation in peacekeeping missions. For example, the Centre for Advanced Studies of National Defence (CESEDEN) worked with the Dutch government to develop a course on gender perspectives and equality in international peacekeeping operations. Contributions have also been made to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives.

From the point of view of conflict-affected countries, the greatest impact of the NAP is reflected in the incorporation of a gender perspective into development co-operation projects in Spain's priority countries (e.g. Colombia and the OPTs). Activities in these countries – and earlier in Bosnia and Herzegovina, supported a number of women's organisations which were working on peacebuilding. In addition, a gender perspective has been incorporated into the training of military personnel for peacekeeping missions. The Spanish government organises training courses for both soldiers from Latin American countries and soldiers which Spain deploys to peace operations. Efforts are made to introduce a gender perspective in the army which is a positive sign.

Gender policies become irrelevant and the NAP is forgotten

With the deepening of the economic crisis and the change of government in late 2011, there has been a significant reduction in the focus on gender issues, while work on UNSCR 1325 was suspended. The budget allocated to development cooperation was reduced by 60%, and this led to a subsequent reduction in activities, including those related to women and peacebuilding. The Ministry of Defence continued to be the most active ministry involved in NAP implementation and continues to provide training activities related to peacekeeping missions, as well as an Equality Observatory. Despite the essential roles which it played in raising awareness of UNSCR 1325 among Spanish citizens, and promoting crucial international women's initiatives, the Spanish office of UN Women was closed due to a lack of funding and political support.

New opportunities arise from Spain's presidency of the UNSC

A major positive development took place in the second half of 2015 when Spain took over the Presidency of the UNSC at the same time as the 15th anniversary of the adoption of UNSCR 1325. The Spanish government undertook to update its NAP in 2016 and to create a national focal point for coordinating the process. It also committed to involving civil society in the process and there have already been some contacts with CSOs, including the organisation of a workshop. However, a more structured method of working with CSOs on the preparation of the second NAP should be developed and applied.

Monitoring and evaluation

The Inter-ministerial Working Group is responsible for monitoring NAP implementation and preparing annual reports. Although these reports do provide some information about the activities which are undertaken by the various ministries, they lack an evaluation mechanism or indicators for measuring outcomes. Moreover, while the monitoring reports are supposed to

be prepared each year, only four have been published since 2007. This may be due to the fact that the Human Rights Unit within the MFA, which leads on the preparation of the monitoring reports, lacks the human resources necessary to carry out this task.

CSOs' involvement in the monitoring process has been limited to some information meetings. CSOs have been highly critical of the consultation process and the way in which the monitoring reports are prepared. Criticisms have been focused on the reports' lack of qualitative information and lack of understanding on UNSCR 1325's fundamentals.

The monitoring reports describe activities and projects without providing qualitative information which shows the extent to which they contributed to promoting the participation of women in peace processes, the protection of women in situations of conflict or violence prevention. It is, therefore, not possible to draw conclusions from them. This is equally true of the educational and training projects mentioned in the reports. A series of courses and seminars are described but there is no accompanying information about their content, the identity of the professors, the number and profile of participants, duration or their impacts, (e.g. whether changes in values and attitudes have been observed, whether personnel participating in peace missions are obliged to participate in them etc.). Since the information presented in the reports does not include the course dates or budgets, it lacks statistical value.

Given that the monitoring reports do not take into account either the UN or EU guidelines for reporting UNSCR 1325 implementation,³ it is extremely difficult to compare the NAP or indeed Spain's overall implementation of the Resolution with that of other countries.

Conclusion

The Spanish government has made strong commitments regarding the implementation of UNSCR 1325. In this context, it is unacceptable that it has been promoting the WPS agenda internationally whilst failing to apply a gender perspective in its domestic policies and allowing inequality and violence against women (VAW) to grow within Spain.

The Spanish government is currently in the process of updating the NAP. While this provides a major opportunity for CSOs to participate in the process, it is essential that CSO involvement is meaningful and goes beyond information sessions. In addition, the new NAP should also incorporate lessons learned from other countries and take into consideration EU-level policies such as the Comprehensive Approach for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325.

In order to ensure that the new NAP is an improvement on the first one, the Spanish government should:

- Operationalise the Inter-ministerial Working Group operational by defining its mandate, identifying the persons in charge and planning its meeting calendar
- Establish a transparent system of information gathering and monitoring, and develop standardised assessment criteria which would facilitate the presentation of clear information regarding progress towards the achievement of each objective. (e.g. through the use of internationally-established indicators)
- Promote the participation of CSOs, especially relevant women's organisations and peace research centres in the Inter-ministerial Working Group (e.g. by providing adequate financial support for CSO-led activities)
- Identify good practices in the area of WPS which can be supported and promoted by the various ministries involved.

³ This is a requirement for CSOs. It is unacceptable that the MFA and other ministries fail to apply the criteria which they themselves adopted.