

U.S. Civil Society Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security



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POLICYbrief

Strengthening the U.S. NAP: Actions for the New Administration's First 100 Days

"...we expect civil society, which informed the development of this Plan, to continue to hold us accountable to these commitments, to help us learn from activities and approaches implemented under the Plan, and to contribute to future revisions of the Plan."

– *The U.S. NAP on Women, Peace, and Security (June 2016)*

The United States Civil Society Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security (U.S. CSWG) was created in July 2010 to support U.S. Government efforts to ensure that women actively participate in advancing peace and security around the world. The development of a National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace, and Security in December 2011, updated in June 2016, is the cornerstone of these efforts.

As a diverse network of 35 civil society organizations with wide expertise across the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, U.S. CSWG advised the U.S. Government on the original NAP as well as the updated version. It stands ready to support the new U.S. Government in strengthening that action plan.

In that spirit, we urge the new U.S. Government to take three main actions in its first 100 days in office:

1) Recommit to the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security. The U.S. CSWG strongly recommends that the next administration reaffirm Executive Order 13595 (2011) entitled *Instituting a National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security* and thereby renew its commitment to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

2) Commit to a review of the U.S. NAP in consultation with civil society, in particular the U.S. CSWG.

3) Establish a Presidential Women, Peace, and Security Interagency Task Force responsible for implementation of the U.S. NAP. The Interagency Task Force would be instructed to form the WPS Council, comprising members of the Interagency Task Force and the U.S. CSWG. The aims of the WPS Council would be to institutionalize consultations between civil society and the U.S. Government and to facilitate the exchange of information. The WPS Council would meet at a minimum twice a year.

The WPS agenda enjoys strong bipartisan support and is essential to promoting U.S. national security and a more peaceful, prosperous world. The U.S. CSWG proposes the following additional actions to signal the U.S. Government's continuing high priority on the WPS agenda. These actions will strengthen the five pillars of the U.S. NAP: National Integration and Institutionalization; Participation in Peace Processes and Decision Making; Protection from Violence; Conflict Prevention; and Access to Relief and Recovery.

Pillar One: National Integration and Institutionalization

- Request that all U.S. implementing agencies review evaluation and monitoring processes established by U.S. Government agencies to measure results of the implementation of the U.S. NAP and share these assessments with the U.S. CSWG.
- Develop new implementation plans that reflect the updated NAP. These plans should address integration of gender perspectives in policy implementation and efforts to improve gender balances within the agencies.

Pillar Two: Participation in Peace Processes and Decision Making

- Require that gender-focused assessments be embedded in the design of new and existing programmatic interventions such as those in support of transitional justice and accountability processes, security sector reform, countering violent extremism, climate change, and political transitions. Additionally, require that assessments conducted by the Departments of State and Defense, USAID, and the National Security Council include consultations with civil society organizations, particularly those that are women-led. In addition, monitoring and evaluation frameworks must measure gendered impacts. All assessments must take place before requests for proposals, statements of objectives, and/or statements of work are drafted.
- Ensure the meaningful participation of key stakeholders, particularly women, in all conflict prevention and resolution efforts, including peace negotiations, national dialogues, and transitional processes. Including women peacebuilders in ongoing processes in Colombia, Syria, South Sudan, and Yemen is particularly important. Current efforts should be reviewed and revised to ensure improved standards of practice that draw on the latest research and experience. Additionally, appoint women to high-level mediation positions and on mediation teams as a core priority to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of these processes.

Pillar Three: Protection from Violence

- Convene key U.S. Government staff, the U.S. CSWG, and other civil society experts and stakeholders to discuss renewed efforts to combat gender-based violence (GBV) in conflict settings. This meeting should focus on integrating and strengthening efforts to prevent and respond to GBV, communication and coordination across programs and initiatives, and best practices, with particular attention to how to provide comprehensive care for victims of GBV in conflict and crisis settings.

- Enforce the Zero Tolerance of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (SEA) policy for U.S. Government employees and contractors, making clear that attacks on women inside and outside of the U.S. armed forces are unacceptable. The perception that U.S. military personnel and contractors can act with impunity—either against fellow service members or women in host communities—severely undermines U.S. foreign policy goals. A certified response advocate must be available wherever U.S. forces are deployed. In order to encourage reporting and ensure transparency and justice, those accused of sexual abuse or exploitation must face a transparent, meaningful judicial process not swept under the rug through internal military inquiries or determined solely within the chain of command.

- Incorporate the zero tolerance policy in trainings and programs for U.S. military and civilian personnel and contractors. When U.S.-trained security personnel are implicated in the sexual abuse of women and children and other violations, the United States itself feels the negative consequences. As such, U.S. personnel or companies involved in the training of security forces abroad must demonstrate understanding and commitment to the policy, respect for human rights and civilian protection, and ability to integrate these values as core and integral components of all their training and assistance programs abroad.

Pillar Four: Conflict Prevention

- Introduce a gender perspective in the Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework (ICAF) and develop and publish gender-sensitive indicators for early warning models, including those dealing with violent extremism, instability, and mass atrocity.
- Invite the U.S. CSWG to review the new ICAF and gender-sensitive indicators for early warning models—including those dealing with countering violent extremism, instability, and mass atrocity prevention—in order to elicit recommendations on how best to use the gender analysis in program design.
- Recognize that women's movements are often the first to hear, see, and feel the threat of conflict arising from extremism or state militarism. Thus it is essential to heed their warnings and recommendations, voiced through the government–civil society WPS Council.
- Acknowledge that independent civil society organizations, including women-led entities and women human rights defenders, are being targeted by states (including U.S. allies) and nonstate actors. Articulate clear commitments to the security and independent functioning of these civil

society groups, particularly because they will be the first to sound the alarm against closing civic spaces and rising intolerance and extremism. Without a robust independent civil society sector, the space for constructive critique and dissent is diminished and the door is opened to radicalized reactions.

adolescent girls in crisis settings and link them to life-saving resources, including reproductive health services. Additionally, invest in building their social capital and networks in order to improve their access to opportunities for formal and informal education and to options to engage in safe livelihoods.

Pillar Five: Access to Relief and Recovery

- Adhere to established guidelines on gender and GBV in humanitarian response. The U.S. Government must require that its partners implement these international guidelines in any program receiving federal funding. Additionally, partners must certify they are training their staff across all sectors in those guidelines. The U.S. Government must also advocate with other donors and foreign governments to take a similar approach.
- Increase attention to adolescent girls in crises. Support dedicated initiatives to identify isolated and at-risk

Looking Forward

The U.S. Civil Society Working Group remains firmly committed to advancing the role of women in advancing peace and security. It is also dedicated to supporting the U.S. Government as it recommits to the U.S. National Action Plan.

The U.S. CSWG looks forward to working with the new administration to ensure this policy has its envisioned impact—fostering just, inclusive, and sustainable peace for all women, men, girls, and boys around the world.

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MEMBERS OF THE U.S. CSWG INCLUDE:

4Girls GLocal Leadership
Alliance for Peacebuilding
American Red Cross
Amnesty International USA
Baha'is of the United States
Equality Now
Fuller Project for International Reporting
Futures Without Violence
Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace & Security
George Washington University, Global Gender Program
Human Rights Watch
Inclusive Security

International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)
International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)
International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)
International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX)
Mina's List
Our Secure Future: Women Make the Difference
PAI
Peace X Peace
Promundo – U.S.
Protect the People

POLICY

Strategy for Humanity
The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP)
United Nations Association of the United States of America
U.S. National Committee of UN Women
Vital Voices Global Partnership
Women Enabled International
Women for Women International
Women In International Security (WIIS)
Women's Action for New Directions (WAND)
Women's Refugee Commission

ABOUT U.S. CSWG

Established in 2010, The U.S. Civil Society Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security (U.S. CSWG) is a network of civil society organizations with years of experience working on issues involving women, war, and peace. The U.S. CSWG informs, promotes, facilitates, and monitors the meaningful implementation of the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security.

