

What is Women, Peace, and Security?

Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) is a policy framework that recognizes that peace and security is more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of violent conflict, the delivery of relief and recovery efforts, and in the forging of lasting peace. WPS acknowledges that women face unique challenges and targeted violence during and after war, and that their equal and full participation is critical in peacebuilding and recovery efforts. Applications of this framework incorporate a gender analysis that identifies and addresses the different experiences and roles of women and men to promote gender equality and improve programming and policy outcomes.

The four core principles of the WPS framework include:

Participation

Women must have equal representation and influence at all levels of peace and security decision-making processes.

Inclusive peace processes that include women as legitimate stakeholders expand the scope of agreements to include a broader set of vital societal priorities and needs required for lasting and just peace.

Protection

Women need protection from all forms of violence, especially conflict-related sexual violence.

As the nature of warfare has changed, civilians are increasingly targeted and women are disproportionately impacted by violent conflict. Protection ensures that women's rights are protected and promoted in conflict-affected situations or other humanitarian crisis.

Prevention

Conflict prevention efforts must incorporate gender perspectives and ensure the prevention of violence against women.

Research demonstrates that the overall physical security of women is one of the best predictors of state security. Conflict prevention efforts must be responsive to gender-based violence and informed by the differences in the experiences of men and women. In addition, intervention strategies can be improved by preventing and fighting impunity for perpetrators of violence.

Relief and Recovery

Women must be able to safely and equitably access all humanitarian and development assistance programs.

The distinct needs of women in crises must be met in all relief, recovery, and rebuilding efforts, while preventing the sexual exploitation and abuse by those meant to help. Women's participation in the design of relief and recovery project ensures that gender perspectives and protection issues are integrated in response efforts.

The U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security

As of December 2017, the United States is one of 74 countries that has created a National Action Plan (NAP). In 2011, when the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security was established, an interagency effort was initiated to amplify and coordinate initiatives framed by the four principles of WPS. The NAP also includes a fifth principle which is to fully integrate and institutionalize gender-responsive approaches and policies across the U.S. Government. The NAP was updated in 2016 after a comprehensive review of the U.S. Government's programming, challenges and lessons learned from the first three years of implementation.

What is the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017?

The Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 was signed into law on October 6, 2017 (Public Law No: 115-68). It promotes women's meaningful inclusion and participation in peace and security processes to prevent, mitigate, or resolve violent conflict. The law ensures Congressional oversight in the U.S. Government's efforts to integrate gender perspectives across its diplomatic, development and defense-related work in conflict-affected environments. A government-wide strategy on Women, Peace, and Security is required by the Act and will be implemented through mechanisms, including interagency coordination, policy development, enhanced professional training and education, and evaluation. The Act requires the following:

A National Strategy (Sec. 5)

The President will submit to Congress a national strategy on Women, Peace, and Security after one year of its enactment, and again four years thereafter. This strategy shall:

- Build on and align with other countries' plans and the coordination with international partners;
- Incorporate specific and measurable goals, benchmarks and evaluation plans to ensure the accountability and effectiveness of all policies and initiatives carried out under the strategy; and,
- Include a specific implementation plan from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of State, Homeland Security, and the Department of Defense.

The Act calls upon the President's strategy to:

- Provide technical assistance and training to female negotiators, peacebuilders, and stakeholders;
- Address security-related barriers to women's participation;
- Encourage increased women's participation in U.S.-funded programs that provide foreign nationals with security and rule of law training;
- Support civil society organizations, especially women's peacebuilding organizations; and
- Expand gender analysis to improve overall program design.

Training (Sec. 6)

The Department of State and USAID are required to ensure that appropriate personnel responsible for or deploying to conflict-affected areas receive training on issues and strategies to ensure meaningful participation by women in conflict prevention and resolution, protecting civilians from violence, and awareness building on international human rights law.

The Department of Defense is required to train relevant personnel in: conflict prevention, peace processes, mitigation, resolution, and security initiatives that addresses the participation of women; gender considerations; and effective practices for ensuring participation by women.

Consultation and Collaboration (Sec. 7)

The Department of State and USAID may establish guidelines for consultation with stakeholders, including local women, youth, ethnic, and religious minorities, regarding U.S. efforts to prevent, mitigate, or resolve violent conflict; and enhance the success of mediation and negotiation processes by ensuring the meaningful participation of women. The Department of State is urged to work with international, regional, national, and local organizations to increase the participation of women in international peacekeeping operations.

Reporting (Sec. 8)

After one year, the Secretary of State along with the USAID Administrator and Secretary of Defense, will brief Congress on existing, enhanced, or newly established training carried out regarding the participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution. Within two years, the President will submit a report to Congress that evaluates the strategy implementation and its impact on U.S. diplomatic efforts and foreign assistance programs.