

DEPARTMENT FOR EVALUATION

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Evaluation of Norwegian efforts for women, peace and security



This report has been authored by:

Javier Fabra-Mata, Department for Evaluation, Norad, with contributions from: Christine Bell, University of Edinburgh; Antonia Potter Prentice, Athena Consortium; Jan-Petter Holtedahl, Department for Evaluation, Norad and Anette Wilhelmsen, Department for Evaluation, Norad.

The report draws on three studies commissioned by Norad's Department for Evaluation as part of this evaluation. These were conducted by Arne Disch, Scanteam; Kirsten Sandberg Natvig, Scanteam; Torunn Wimpelmann, Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI); Stephanie Crasto, Scanteam; Robert Forster, CMI; Syra Khan, Scanteam; Martha Inés Romero, independent consultant; Elling Tjønneland, CMI; Mirwais Wardak, Peace, Training and Research Organisation (PTRO); Pilar Domingo, ODI; Torun Reite, Scanteam; and Espen Villanger, CMI.

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Executive Summary

In 2000, UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on WPS was ground-breaking in bringing to the fore women's roles and perspectives in conflict resolution, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, humanitarian response and post-conflict reconstruction. Norway was among the first countries to develop a national action plan (NAP) on WPS (in 2006), and is now implementing its fourth (2019–22). During the current four-year period, Norway has 10 WPS priority countries.

The main purpose of this evaluation is to assess the effects of Norwegian women, peace and security (WPS) efforts supported with Norwegian development aid funds. The evaluation assesses whether those efforts have been internally and externally coherent and effective, and how they have evolved since 2000.

This evaluation considers Norwegian WPS efforts from the adoption of UNSCR 1325 in October 2000 up to the end of 2020. Its scope is limited to one pillar of the WPS agenda, the participation of women in decision-making in peace processes and negotiations, and in peacebuilding more generally.

Conclusions

IMPACT

Norway's promotion of women's participation in peace efforts has led to positive results in conflict-affected areas. This is true of both including a gender perspective in peace agreements, and strengthening women's (and men's) rights and meeting their needs and priorities.

Norway is a global leader in norm setting and normative adherence. Norway plays a symbolic 'driver' role for WPS, particularly in relation to peace efforts. Examples include forming one of the first networks of women mediators, and pushing for female appointments and gender parity in peace mediation and facilitation teams.

Norway's NAPs have arguably been more successful as frameworks for political mobilisation around the WPS agenda than as tools for managing development assistance. Norway's NAPs have made the Norwegian administration double down on WPS. Each NAP has to some extent built on its predecessor and, cumulatively, these plans have raised awareness and competence

relating to different aspects of the WPS agenda. They have also contributed to solidify understanding and commitments relating to the WPS agenda within the Norwegian administration.

EFFECTIVENESS AND COHERENCE

Despite these helpful roles and impacts, this evaluation finds that Norway's WPS initiatives are neither well defined nor strategically combined. Norway's NAPs have not been as successful as coordination and strategic planning tools for development aid. A theory of change approach to women's participation in peace efforts underpins the 2019–22 NAP, which comes with a results framework. Yet these are not paired with a strategy on how best to allocate resources and coordinate WPS efforts to achieve the expected results. The usefulness of a results framework lies in changing the course of action as interventions progress, based on monitoring and learning. This calls for cycles of reflection, planning and management – the very weaknesses in Norway's current WPS approach.



The concept of WPS priority countries as it has been implemented so far by Norway has very limited value as a tool to foster an integrated approach. Being a WPS priority country does not guarantee additional Norwegian financial or technical support. The latter is in part explained by limited staff numbers and competing priorities. There is limited overlap between the countries listed as Norway's development partners and its WPS priority countries. Norway funds significant WPS activity in some non-WPS priority countries, much of which is not reported in WPS annual reports.

Nothing indicates that a gender perspective in peace processes facilitated by Norway has been strengthened by the country being on the WPS priority list. Norwegian direct support to secure women's meaningful participation in a peace process has not been determined by whether the country is on this list. Norwegian diplomatic peace efforts in a country tend to translate into that country joining the WPS priority list. But the Section for Peace and Reconciliation, which is primarily responsible for Norwegian peace facilitation efforts in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), has its own WPS strategy that applies to all processes in which the section is involved. The section also has specific strategies for its engagements, irrespective of a country's status in Norway's WPS priority list.

Over the years, Norway has sharpened its women's participation focus, gradually increasing its emphasis on peace processes (pre-negotiations stages, formal talks and the implementation of peace agreements). In line with this, a neater division of labour has emerged between WPS NAPs and gender equality NAPs. This evaluation finds this a logical evolution that can enable transformative change on the ground when synergies are realised, especially with geographic concentration and long-term horizons. Meaningful participation in peace processes and subsequent engagement with formal institutions and actors (the realm of the WPS NAP) is intrinsically linked to the long-term processes of transforming informal institutions and harmful social norms.

Civil society strengthening is a critical factor in including gender references in peace agreements. This was the case in Colombia, where Norway partnered with civil society before, during and after the signing of the 2016 peace agreement.

But civil society strengthening does not happen overnight. It requires long-term efforts and support from partners like Norway, sometimes in 'capacity building' (around peace processes, but also organisational capacity), and often facilitating networking and connectivity

between grassroots organisations and local, regional and national institutions.

Women in the front line advocating for change on the ground in conflict-affected countries are exposed to multiple risks. Norway has not systematically required WPS implementers to produce either comprehensive risk assessments that are sensitive to these risks or action plans to avoid or mitigate them. Furthermore, there is a response gap in how to handle these risks as part of WPS partnerships.

KNOWLEDGE AND ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING

Norway does seek and use knowledge in its WPS interventions to promote women's participation in peace efforts, such as by commissioning research and evaluations and following up on some findings. The evolution of its NAPs also demonstrates an increase in, and application of, organisational learning over time.

Nevertheless, Norway does not systemise learning around existing knowledge exchange initiatives, and does not systematically use monitoring and reporting around indicators in the WPS results framework in its decision-making.

Recommendations

Based on its conclusions, this evaluation makes the following recommendations:

1. Phase out the WPS priority country list concept and focus on countries where Norway has already committed support. The small gains of having a WPS priority country list in terms of profiling do not offset its clear and severe limitations in concentrating efforts over time, galvanising the Norwegian administration and acting as a catalyst for change. This evaluation recommends building on Norway's existing list of development partner countries, strengthening WPS commitments to those countries and acknowledging that peace and development do not follow linear trajectories – today's development partner countries can become tomorrow's conflict-affected countries. In view of this, Norway's WPS efforts could be better served by being rooted in longstanding relationships and rich contextual understanding like those gained from working in, and with, partner countries over time.

All conflict-affected countries listed as Norway's development partner countries should automatically become WPS priority focus areas. This will ensure greater policy alignment and development aid concentration. Furthermore, it will

facilitate a more efficient use of existing competence within the Norwegian administration system – and the consolidation of expertise.

Discontinuing the WPS priority country list would not negatively affect peace efforts led by the MFA's Section for Peace and Reconciliation in other countries, which could continue to prioritise WPS based on section strategies. Neither would it affect Norway's humanitarian efforts, which are not geographically constrained by pre-existing country lists.

2. Adopt a strategic WPS portfolio approach to improve coordination and coherence, and enhance the likelihood of achieving sustainable results. Building on the seeds planted by its four WPS NAPs, Norway should aim to weave together its WPS efforts by:

- Identifying a sound way of measuring financial commitments to WPS, especially in relation to women's participation in peace. This will not only help Norway to report on (progress towards) results more accurately, but also to plan strategically to maximise its potential to achieve results.
- Carrying out periodic and systematic planning

processes around country portfolios, revisiting theories of change in formalised information exchanges. Sufficient resources should be set aside for these exchanges, which should involve all stakeholders who have relevant WPS responsibility, and consider all partners who receive support from Norway through trust funds and multilateral organisations. Such processes should precede specific interventions and new partnerships, and become reference points for them.

- Continuing to hold annual gatherings, bringing together those working on the WPS agenda and extending this practice to all conflict-affected countries in Norway's list of development partner countries (see recommendation 1), and inviting embassies from other relevant countries (e.g. those involved with conflicts and processes followed by the Section for Peace and Reconciliation). With the right timing, these meetings should facilitate knowledge sharing and inform strategic planning.
- Revising the results framework in the WPS NAP to make it fit for monitoring, strategic planning and systematic learning. This includes revisiting the women's participation in peace change pathway

underlying the results framework and making room for indicators on funding support funnelled through civil society organisations (CSOs).

- Matching ambitions and expectations with resources. This is especially true in the case of the Special Envoy position – which covers a wide range of critical tasks at many levels – and Norad.

3. Protect and safeguard women human rights

defenders. This calls for candid reflection on risk tolerance and protection capabilities, and taking into account the current mandates and delegation of responsibilities between the MFA in Oslo, Norwegian embassies and Norad. Meanwhile, existing practice can be improved by:

- Requesting assessments in funding applications to consider these risks from a multifaceted perspective (e.g. mental health and well-being, digital risks, physical risks, reputational risks), evaluating applications based on the quality of these assessments.
- Welcoming the inclusion of earmarked budget lines

in funding applications to cover the costs of risk assessments and mitigation measures.

- Making sure that risk assessment updates are always on the agenda for periodic meetings with grantees.
- Taking stock of, and distilling, lessons from positive practices and experiences within the Norwegian administration that support women peacebuilders.



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Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation

www.norad.no

evaluation@norad.no

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