

Women, Peace and Security Mid-Term Review

3 June 2026



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KPMG acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and future as the Traditional Custodians of the land, water and skies of where we work.

At KPMG, our future is one where all Australians are united by a shared, honest, and complete understanding of our past, present, and future. We are committed to making this future a reality. Our story celebrates and acknowledges that the cultures, histories, rights, and voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People are heard, understood, respected, and celebrated.

Australia's First Peoples continue to hold distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economical relationships with their land, water and skies. We take our obligations to the land and environments in which we operate seriously.

We look forward to making our contribution towards a new future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples so that they can chart a strong future for themselves, their families and communities. We believe we can achieve much more together than we can apart.

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Glossary

Acronym	Term	Acronym	Term
AIMR	Annual Investment Monitoring Report	IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	LAW	Legal Action Worldwide
AGD	Attorney General's Department	LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual
AIGES	Australia's International Gender Equality Strategy	M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
ABF	Australian Border Force	MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
ACMC	Australian Civil Military Centre	MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning
AUSCO	Australian Cultural Orientation Program	NAP	National Action Plan
ADF	Australian Defence Force	NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
AFP	Australian Federal Police	NEMA	National Emergency Management Agency
APS	Australian Public Service	NGO	Non-Government Organisation
BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
CPS	Climate–Peace–Security	OFW	Office for Women
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women	PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
CRSV	Conflict-related sexual violence	PSAT	Pacific Special Advisory Team
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	PWMN	Pacific Women Mediators Network
COP	Conference of Parties	RRW	Rapid Response Window
CSP	Cyber Safety Pasifika	SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water	SPDMM	South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	SEAWPM	Southeast Asian Women Peace Mediators
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction	UK	United Kingdom
FAIR	Fostering Advancement of Inclusive and Rights-Based Justice Program	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
FTE	Full Time Equivalent	UNSCR 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325
GENAD	Gender Adviser	UN WOMEN	United Nations Women
GBV	Gender-Based Violence	VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
GFP	Gender Focal Point	WOG	Whole-of-Government
GPS	Gender, Peace and Security Steering Group	WPS	Women, Peace and Security
IDC	Interdepartmental Committee	WPHF	Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund

Executive Summary

KPMG has been engaged by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to undertake the mid-term review of Australia's Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2021–2031) (the NAP). The mid-term review assesses progress to date toward planned outcomes, the effectiveness of current governance and delivery arrangements, and provides evidence-based insights to strengthen implementation for the remainder of the NAP period.

Background and context

Grounded in Australia's commitments under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), Australia's NAP advances four objectives: preventing conflict and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV); promoting women's participation in peace and security decision-making; protecting human rights; and ensuring the needs and agency of women and girls are central to relief and recovery.¹

These objectives sit within a global environment where momentum on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) is under pressure.² Rising conflict-related SGBV underscores the urgency of Australia's efforts.³ Addressing SGBV is also a core priority of Australia's International Gender Equality Strategy (AIGES), which elevates WPS alongside gender-responsive climate and humanitarian action, women's economic empowerment, and locally led leadership.⁴ Both the NAP and AIGES place particular responsibility on Australia to maintain WPS leadership across the Indo-Pacific if Australia is to achieve its objectives in the region.

Southeast Asia and the Pacific region face an increasingly complex security environment where political tensions, conflict dynamics, and climate-related shocks intersect with persistent gender inequality.⁵ In parts of Southeast Asia, including Myanmar and areas of the southern Philippines and Thailand, ongoing instability continues to pose heightened risks for women and girls, including increased vulnerability to SGBV.⁶ Across the Pacific, countries experience some of the highest global rates of violence against women, compounded by the impacts of climate change, natural disasters and displacement, which can deepen protection risks and intensify existing inequalities.⁷ Climate-induced displacement increases the risk of gender-based violence (GBV), exploitation and abuse. Women and girls in displaced communities are more vulnerable to trafficking, domestic violence and other forms of exploitation.⁸

¹ United Nations Security Council (UNSC), *Resolution 1325 (2000)*, S/RES/1325, 31 October 2000.

² S Hutchinson, 'US defense secretary cancels women, peace and security programs', *The Strategist*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 9 May 2025.

³ United Nations Women (UN Women), *Wars on women escalate as global conflicts reach record highs*, UN Women website, 20 October 2025.

⁴ DFAT, *Australia's international gender equality strategy*, DFAT, 2025.

⁵ E Howard, 'Linking gender, climate change and security in the Pacific Islands region: a systematic review', *Ambio*, March 2023, 52(3):518-533, doi:10.1007/s13280-022-01813-0; S Seah, J Lin, M Martinus, K Fong, PTP Thao and IZ Aridati, *The state of Southeast Asia: 2025 survey report*, ASEAN Studies Centre and ISEAS Yusof Isha Institute, 2025, pp 14-21.

⁶ United Nations (UN), *Gender-responsive arms control, ending impunity key to reverse record level of sexual violence against women, girls in conflict zones, speakers tell Security Council* [meeting coverage], UN, 23 April 2024; United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, *Myanmar: new report urges robust support for women, girls and LGBT people in post-coup Myanmar*, Press releases, UN website, 02 July 2024; United Nations Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls, *End of mission statement: official visit to Thailand (2-13 December 2024)*, UN, 13 December 2024.

⁷ UN Women, *Pacific partnership to end violence against women and girls*, United Nations Women in the Pacific website, n.d., accessed 10 December 2025.

⁸ Care, *Evicted by climate change: confronting the gendered impacts of climate-induced displacement*, Care, 2020.

Across the Indo-Pacific, gendered dynamics and inequalities are increasingly leveraged in ways that exacerbate insecurity and undermine social cohesion.⁹ Conflict actors, extremists and political groups have used gendered disinformation, targeted online harassment, and SGBV to intimidate women, restrict their participation in public life, and weaken democratic and peacebuilding processes.¹⁰ These tactics not only amplify existing inequalities but also erode the resilience of communities and institutions. As noted by stakeholders, addressing the “weaponisation of gender” is therefore central to strengthening stability, safeguarding civic space, and ensuring that women can contribute fully to peace, security and decision-making across the region.

Scope of the mid-term review

The mid-term review assessed Australia’s progress in implementing the NAP across the four WPS pillars. It considered the appropriateness, relevance and coherence of activities undertaken during the first half of the NAP period and the extent to which implementation remained aligned with Australia’s commitments under UNSCR 1325. The review analysed governance arrangements, inter-agency coordination and resourcing across Australian Government agency implementing partners. Evidence was drawn from document review, comparative analysis, and consultation with key stakeholders to evaluate how well the NAP was positioned to advance its intended outcomes and respond to evolving regional and global security dynamics.

In line with the agreed Terms of Reference (see [Appendix A](#)), the review provides a high-level assessment rather than a detailed impact evaluation, identifying strengths, challenges and opportunities to guide the remaining five years of NAP implementation. It draws on consideration of the quality of engagement with civil society, First Nations women, and Australia’s regional partners in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, DFAT Post engagement globally on WPS initiatives, as well as the adequacy of M&E arrangements to support accountability and demonstration of success. The review did not undertake primary data collection involving vulnerable individuals. The findings and recommendations are intended to support more effective coordination, sharpen strategic focus and ensure the NAP remains fit-for-purpose for the next phase of delivery across the Indo-Pacific.

Alignment with Australian Government priorities

Australia’s WPS NAP intends to reinforce the Government’s commitment to a peaceful, stable and inclusive Indo-Pacific. By integrating gender perspectives into conflict prevention, humanitarian response and governance, WPS strengthens regional resilience and supports Australia’s broader foreign policy objectives. The agenda also complements national priorities on climate adaptation, digital safety and inclusive economic development, positioning Australia as a trusted partner in promoting security and stability across the region.

⁹ ME Veritasia, AN Muthmainnah and M Lima-Santos, ‘Gendered disinformation: a pernicious threat to equality in the Asia Pacific’, *Media Asia*, 28 June 2024, 52(4):653-661, doi:10.1080/01296612.2024.2367859; N Veronika and D Afrianty, ‘Special issue editorial: gender and security in the Indo-Pacific’, *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, 2025, 20(4):425-433, doi:10.1080/18335330.2025.2563210; P Oo, ‘Gendered insecurities and gender-responsive security sector reform in the Indo-Pacific’, *9 Dash Line*, 20 June 2023.

¹⁰ Veritasia et al., ‘Gendered disinformation: A pernicious threat to equality in the Asia Pacific’; Veronika and Afrianty, ‘Special issue editorial: Gender and security in the Indo-Pacific’.

The NAP is a foundational component of Australia's national security approach, reflecting evidence that peace processes and institutions are more durable and effective when women participate meaningfully in decision-making. Current national discussions on gender equality as a security and economic imperative underline the relevance of WPS in shaping adaptive, future-focused policy settings.¹¹ WPS also aligns with Australia's international development policy by linking gender equality with crisis response, climate resilience, cyber and e-safety, and whole-of-government efforts to advance peace, prosperity and human rights throughout the Indo-Pacific. Australia's NAP also emphasises stronger monitoring and evaluation (M&E), inclusive governance, and deeper engagement with civil society.¹²

International Comparator Analysis

International approaches from Japan, the United Kingdom (UK), Canada and the Philippines highlight opportunities for Australia to further strengthen its WPS leadership and respond to persistent gaps across the Indo-Pacific region. Japan's flexible, initiative-based design and use of independent expert evaluation demonstrate how adaptive monitoring can support continuous improvement, while the UK's rigorous governance architecture and strong domestic commitments model the value of structured accountability and whole-of-government oversight. Canada's formal partnerships with civil society and Indigenous organisations illustrate how inclusive governance can embed lived experience into national decision-making. The Philippines' comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) system mandates annual public reporting, triennial multi-stakeholder mid-term reviews, a terminal evaluation and the development of a consolidated national WPS database. The Philippines also have published a detailed Indicator Handbook and have comprehensive mid-term objectives with a sound measurement methodology.

Together, these models point to opportunities for Australia to deepen partnerships, sharpen evaluation systems and expand domestic and international coherence links. These adjustments can position Australia to better address regional gaps such as uneven NAP uptake, limited localisation and variable institutional capacity across the Pacific and Southeast Asia, and to play a more catalytic role in advancing WPS outcomes in the region.

Key findings of the mid-term review

The findings from this mid-term review provide a consolidated assessment of progress to date, drawing on evidence from consultations, monitoring data, and document analysis to identify progress, enablers, key challenges and emerging risks. Together, they highlight the systemic and contextual factors shaping the effectiveness of program delivery across the WPS agenda, including regional dynamics that influence Australia's positioning and capability to lead. These insights form the foundation for determining the strategic shifts and operational priorities required to strengthen performance and guide implementation over the next five years.

¹¹ The Department of the House of Representatives, *New inquiry into gender equality as a national security and economic security imperative*, Parliament of Australia website, 6 November 2025.

¹² Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), *Australian national action plan on women, peace and security 2021-2031*, DFAT, 2021.



Finding 1

Finding 1. Strong progress toward women’s meaningful participation, driven by regional networks and institutional strengthening is evident

Regional women’s mediator networks and partnerships with United Nations Women (UN Women) have enhanced women’s role in peace processes across Southeast Asia and the Pacific, supporting agenda setting, dispute resolution, and normative change. However, civil society stakeholders recognised there are opportunities for Australia to strengthen efforts and support for humanitarian crises globally.



Finding 2

Finding 2. Progress made toward reducing sexual and gender-based violence is uneven and not consistently captured across agencies

Australia funds and delivers SGBV prevention and response initiatives (e.g., Australian Federal Police’s (AFP) regional programs and Home Affairs’ *Women at Risk* visa scheme), but these are not fully reported within the NAP framework. Fragmentation, inconsistent coordination, limited data collection mechanisms and under recognition of frontline civil society contributions limit the ability to assess national progress. Best practice also emphasises the importance of creating formal avenues for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) to inform and influence policy; however, Australia does not currently have structured mechanisms to ensure CRSV survivor voices are integrated into the design, monitoring, and evaluation of these initiatives.



Finding 3

Finding 3. NAP implementation on CRSV lacks sufficient whole-of-government coordination, survivor engagement, and integration across security and humanitarian domains

Despite CRSV being a core priority of the NAP, consultations highlighted significant gaps in coordination, consistency, and capability across agencies involved in NAP delivery. Stakeholders noted that CRSV is often treated as a peripheral or specialised issue rather than integrated into Australia’s broader conflict prevention, stabilisation, peacebuilding, humanitarian, and security efforts. In addition, Australia does not yet have structured mechanisms for survivor-centred engagement, limiting the extent to which CRSV survivors (including women, men, gender-diverse people and children) and frontline women’s organisations can shape policy, influence early-warning systems, or guide accountability efforts. There is also opportunity to consider embedding a transitional justice-based approach and reparations-oriented approach into humanitarian settings and Australia’s WPS activities. Civil society stakeholders emphasised that Australia could become a leader in prosecuting CRSV crimes.

This would build on from Australia's action to hold Afghanistan to account for violating the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and DFAT's support for the Australian Institute for International Affairs and the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Elimination of Violence against Women to host an international conference on CRSV in 2025.

Opportunities also exist to better align the NAP's international CRSV commitments with Australia's domestic agenda on SGBV. While both policy domains share common principles such as trauma-informed practice, prevention, and accountability, current linkages are inconsistent and underutilised, missing opportunities to leverage shared investments, expertise, and evidence.¹³ Without strengthened whole-of-government coordination, clearer integration across security and humanitarian mandates, and more systematic survivor engagement, Australia's ability to deliver on its CRSV obligations under the NAP and to maintain credibility in regional and multilateral WPS leadership will remain constrained.



Finding 4

Finding 4. Australia's WPS architecture requires a strategic shift from a development centred model to a security integrated approach

Consultations highlighted that WPS is still perceived internally as a development or organisational culture issue rather than part of Australia's core foreign policy, security strategy, and geopolitical posture. Integrating WPS into a whole-of-government priority focusing on conflict prevention, cyber policy, climate security, crisis response architectures, and peacebuilding is critical to remain credible in an increasingly contested Indo-Pacific. Such integration is not only essential for Australia's credibility but also for the overall effectiveness and impact of its foreign and security policy.



Finding 5

Finding 5. Climate, regional and national security, cyber harms, and mis- and disinformation have become major WPS challenges but are not fully integrated into NAP implementation

Stakeholders consistently identified climate change, displacement, gendered online harms, and mis- and disinformation as escalating threats to women's participation, safety, and cohesion. These crosscutting issues are central to regional and national security but are insufficiently embedded in current WPS programming, governance, and indicators.

¹³ Department of Social Services, *National plan to end violence against women and children 2022 – 2023*, DSS, 2022.



Finding 6

Finding 6. Australia remains a trusted and principled regional WPS leader, but its influence is increasingly constrained by global headwinds

Stakeholders identified that Australia is seen as a credible and stabilising actor in the Indo-Pacific, particularly through sustained support to women mediators, civil society, and multilateral institutions. In particular, stakeholders acknowledged the critical role that WPS engagement plays in supporting security relationships around the globe, with WPS often recognised as a trusted entry point for collaboration or discussions regarding broader security strategy. However, the growing anti-gender equality movement poses a significant risk to the sustainability and impact of global WPS efforts. In this context, expectations are intensifying for Australia to not only shoulder a greater share of visible leadership, but also to invest more substantially in core WPS and gender equality partnerships and institutions to maintain momentum and counteract these regressive pressures.



Finding 7

Finding 7. Whole of government coordination and implementation remains limited. There are clear opportunities to strengthen strategic and operational integration to accelerate WPS outcomes

There are significant opportunities to deepen integration across agencies, strategically and operationally, to accelerate WPS outcomes. These include strengthening joint policy development, embedding shared performance frameworks, enhancing cross-agency governance, and expanding coordinated delivery mechanisms at country, regional and multilateral levels. Critical Australian Public Service (APS) agencies such as the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), e-Safety Commissioner, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEE), and cyber/intelligence agencies are not systematically integrated into WPS coordination. This undermines policy coherence, particularly on climate security, digital harms, misinformation, and domestic gender security issues.



Finding 8

Finding 8. Monitoring and Evaluation systems remain output heavy and lack the sophistication of international best practice

Australia's WPS NAP Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) approach captures activities delivered but not outcomes. It aims to report on qualitative insights and case studies to identify progress and relies heavily on activity and output data to evidence impact of programs. This approach results in limitations in the ability to attribute impact from the programs. In contrast, the UK uses baseline studies, midterm evaluations, refined indicators, and parliamentary reporting to demonstrate impact and enable adaptive management. The Philippines has a comprehensive MEAL system, and Indicator Handbook and mid-term objectives with a robust methodology for measuring progress. Australia lacks a similarly structured, cyclical, and outcome focused systems.



Finding 9

Finding 9. Civil society partnerships are high impact but increasingly uneven and transactional

Australia's longstanding relationships with civil society remain a major asset, supporting legitimacy, localisation, and context specific problem solving. Globally, Australia is viewed as a leader on genuine engagement and partnership with civil society. However, domestically, engagement has become inconsistent across agencies, with less transparent feedback loops and reduced predictability. Civil society emphasised a growing disconnect between consultation and policy decision making.



Finding 10

Finding 10. Domestic–international divide reduces policy coherence and weakens Australia's credibility

Compared with the UK, Canada, Philippines and Japan, Australia's NAP embeds limited domestic commitments, despite significant relevant work occurring across Home Affairs, AFP and state level institutions. The absence of domestic reporting or integration into the NAP reduces visibility of achievements and creates misalignment between international leadership and internal practice.

Recommendations to support the next five years of delivery

The recommendations that follow outline the strategic and operational actions required to accelerate progress and position the program to achieve its objectives over the remaining five years. They build directly on the findings of this mid-term review, identifying the key shifts needed to strengthen implementation, enhance partnerships, and respond to emerging regional dynamics. Together, these recommendations aim to reinforce Australia's leadership on WPS and ensure the program delivers sustained, measurable impact through to the end of the strategy period.

Further detail on each of these recommendations, including activities which may be considered, expected impact and implementation considerations, are available in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Priority Area 1

Enhance Whole of Government Coordination, Coherence and Accountability

Recommendation 1. Expand IDC membership to include additional APS agencies and dedicated operational partners, while strengthening civil society engagement to embed WPS-aligned, whole-of-government crisis coordination with real-time response capability.

Recommendation 2. Align WPS accountability within DFAT and relevant agencies to a security function to integrate emerging risks, improve coordination with national security partners, and drive mission-aligned, whole-of-APS engagement on security and crisis outcomes.

Recommendation 3. Integrate Women, Peace and Security considerations into existing scenario-based disaster, cyber, and disinformation exercises to strengthen coordination, test safeguards, improve whole-of-government readiness, and ensure broad participation.

Recommendation 4. Update the M&E framework to align indicators and measures with current data and revised priorities, focusing on clear, actionable outcomes tailored to each delivery partner.

Recommendation 5. Increase Women, Peace and Security operational capacity by deploying specialised advisers in conflict-affected areas, upskilling current practitioners, and building a sustainable pipeline of future WPS advisers to support regional security programs.

Recommendation 6. Strengthen Australia's response to conflict-related sexual violence by improving whole-of-government coordination, survivor-centred practice, and alignment across international and domestic policy, operations, accountability mechanisms, and regional and multilateral partnerships under the NAP.

Priority Area 2

Establish Gender-responsive Early Warning, Data and Monitoring Systems

Recommendation 7. Conduct a feasibility study to assess the value of a unified, gender-sensitive risk dashboard that integrates climate, disaster, cyber, and online safety data to support faster, more coordinated decision-making and regional crisis response.

Recommendation 8. Embed Women, Peace and Security considerations across government early-warning systems by strengthening coordination, integrating gender-sensitive risk indicators, and enabling rapid, shared alerts to prevent and respond to emerging instability.

Priority Area 3

Regional and International Partnerships to Scale WPS Impacts

Recommendation 9. Co-fund Women, Peace and Security initiatives with regional and multilateral partners to scale impact across the Pacific and Southeast Asia through shared expertise, joint training, regional data standards, and coordinated long-term collaboration.

Recommendation 10. Establish structured two-way knowledge-sharing mechanisms that connect Australia's domestic gender-responsive, resilience, and inclusive security approaches with its international WPS work, to strengthen policy coherence and First Nations leadership, and enhance Australia's credibility and impact in regional engagement.

Priority Area 4

Addressing Emerging and Non-Traditional Security Risks through WPS

Recommendation 11. Strengthen women's leadership in climate adaptation by supporting their roles in planning, early warning systems, and community resilience through community-led initiatives, gender-responsive disaster risk reduction policies, and regional climate security engagement.

Recommendation 12. Embed digital safety and counter-disinformation as core WPS priorities within Australia's conflict prevention and regional security agenda to protect women online, counter harmful narratives, strengthen early warning, and amplify women's participation in peace and security processes.

Priority Area 5

Resourcing WPS for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding

Recommendation 13. Expand support for women's peace leadership by increasing funding for women mediators and community-led peacebuilding and justice initiatives, strengthening training, mentoring, and survivor-centred approaches across the Pacific, Southeast Asia, and globally.

Recommendation 14. Use an existing rapid funding mechanism, or establish a WPS Rapid Response Fund if none exists, to provide fast, flexible support to women's organisations involved in peace negotiations and crisis response across the Pacific and Southeast Asia.



Introduction

Purpose of the review

The review was commissioned to assess progress towards objectives and alignment of Australia's implementation of the WPS agenda under the Second National Action Plan (2021–2031). It aims to:

- Evaluate how well commitments under UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions have been integrated across government agencies.
- Identify progress, gaps, and emerging priorities (e.g., climate-security, cyber threats, First Nations perspectives).
- Inform future policy directions and resource allocation to strengthen WPS outcomes globally and regionally.

Review scope

The review covers:

Timeframe: Activities implemented since the launch of the Second National Action Plan in **2021 through 2025** (mid-term review).

Scope of Activities: Whole-of-government actions across DFAT, Defence, AFP, Post and the Australian Civil-Military Centre (ACMC), including:

- Diplomatic engagement and advocacy in multilateral forums.
- Capacity-building programs in Asia-Pacific.
- Integration of gender perspectives in peacekeeping, humanitarian response, and security operations.
- Partnerships with civil society and regional organisations.

Approach

The review employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative techniques to ensure a comprehensive assessment. Data collection involved a systematic document and literature review of key policy documents, including progress reports, agency implementation plans (where possible), relevant legislation, academic research and grey literature, to identify key policy frameworks, international commitments and global best practices. This was complemented by stakeholder consultations conducted through semi-structured interviews and focus groups with a sample of APS implementing partners, DFAT investment partners, civil society stakeholders, and DFAT posts. Stakeholders who were unable to attend in-person consultations were invited to contribute via an online form, which was also made available to all participants to provide additional insights following the consultations. Case studies of selected domestic and international initiatives, drawn from consultations and the document and literature review, were examined for relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and lessons learned. Data analysis primarily included thematic analysis to identify trends, gaps and success factors, considering progress against the planned objectives and anticipated outcomes.

Limitations

The review drew on a mix of quantitative and qualitative inputs, including progress reports, strategy and policy documents, contemporary literature, and extensive stakeholder consultations. However, the current M&E framework does not require implementing agencies to report quantitative data against specific measures or objectives. This significantly limits the ability to assess progress against intended outcomes or evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives under the NAP.

As a result, progress has largely been measured through the completion of activities rather than demonstrable impact. Consequently, this independent mid-term review relied primarily on case studies, qualitative evidence, and consultation insights provided by implementing agencies, investment partners, and civil society to analyse progress against objectives and outcomes.

The snapshot summaries provided under each outcome in this report offer a high-level overview of selective WPS activities undertaken by implementing partners. They are intended as illustrative highlights and should not be regarded as a comprehensive account of all activities conducted.

Strategic Context

The global WPS agenda has undergone significant evolution since its inception in 2000. The adoption of UNSCR 1325 marked a turning point by recognising women as active agents in peacebuilding rather than passive victims of conflict.¹⁴ This foundational shift paved the way for a series of ten subsequent Security Council resolutions that broadened the WPS framework, embedding gender perspectives into peacekeeping operations, mediation efforts, and post-conflict recovery strategies.

Over the past two decades, WPS has been institutionalised at both national and regional levels. More than 100 countries have developed NAPs to operationalise WPS commitments, while regional organisations such as the European Union, African Union, ASEAN and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) have integrated WPS principles into their security and defence frameworks.¹⁵ The South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting (SPDMM) has also integrated WPS into its governance framework and is developing a WPS Guidance Note for consideration at the next SPDMM in 2026.¹⁶

Within the United Nations (UN) system, gender advisers (GENADs) and WPS focal points have become standard features of peacekeeping missions, signalling a systemic shift toward gender-responsive approaches.¹⁷ Quantitative analysis by Laurel Stone, as cited in UN Women's global study on the implementation of UNSCR 1325, indicates that peace agreements are 35 per cent more likely to endure for at least 15 years when women are involved in their creation.¹⁸

Despite these advances, progress remains uneven. Women's participation in UN peacekeeping has doubled since 2017, and gender provisions are increasingly included in peace agreements.¹⁹ However, women still account for less than 10 per cent of negotiators globally, and funding for women-led peacebuilding initiatives remains critically low, with under 1 per cent of aid directed to conflict-affected states.²⁰ These gaps highlight persistent structural and resource barriers to full implementation of the WPS agenda.

The WPS landscape is also adapting to emerging global challenges. Issues such as climate insecurity, cyber threats, violent extremism, and backlash against women's rights have complicated implementation, requiring a broader interpretation of WPS beyond traditional conflict settings.²¹ Today, WPS is increasingly linked to disaster response, digital security, and climate-related displacement, reflecting the interconnected nature of modern security threats.

¹⁴ UNSC, *Resolution 1325 (2000)*.

¹⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), *NATO policy on women, peace and security (2024)*, NATO, 10 July 2024, accessed 10 December 2025; S Hutchinson, 'Reflecting on 25 years of UNSC resolution 1325', *The Strategist*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 3 July 2025, accessed 10 December 2025; ASEAN, *Joint Statement by the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus on Women, Peace and Security*, ASEAN, 16 November 2023, accessed 29 January 2026; ASEAN, *ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security*, ASEAN, November 16 2022, accessed 29 January 2026.

¹⁶ The Hon Richard Marles MP (25 October 2025), *Joint Communique – South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting* [media release], Department of Defence, accessed 29 January 2026.

¹⁷ United Nations Peacekeeping, *Women, peace and security*, UN Peacekeeping website, n.d., accessed 8 January 2026.

¹⁸ L Stone, 'Quantitative analysis of women's participation in peace processes', Annex II in *Reimagining peacemaking: Women's roles in peace processes*, International Peace Institute, June 2015, p 34; R Coomaraswamy, *Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing the peace: a global study on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*, UN Women, 2015.

¹⁹ United Nations Security Council, *Women and peace and security: report of the Secretary-General*, S/2025/556, 5 September 2025.

²⁰ R George, C Koppell, J Smith and A Kawamura, *Funding for women, peace and security: reflections on 25 years*, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2025; UNSC, *Women and peace and security: Report of the Secretary-General*.

²¹ C Hamilton, N Naam and LJ Shepherd, *Twenty years of women, peace and security national action plans: analysis and lessons learned*, University of Sydney, 2020; Veronika and Afrianty, 'Special issue editorial: Gender and security in the Indo-Pacific'.

This evolution underscores the need for intersectional approaches, stronger accountability mechanisms, and greater investment in grassroots women's organisations to sustain progress.

In multilateral forums, some permanent members of the Security Council have expressed reservations about aspects of the WPS agenda, often emphasising concerns around sovereignty, mandate scope, and prioritisation of core security issues.²² These positions typically manifest through calls for more limited language in resolutions, caution against expanding WPS provisions beyond traditional conflict settings, and resistance to linking gender considerations with broader peacekeeping or sanctions frameworks.²³ While these perspectives do not reject WPS outright, they reflect a preference for a narrower interpretation. This cautious stance at the global level often translates into slower or more limited implementation of WPS commitments in regional contexts, including the Asia-Pacific. When international frameworks lack strong language or clear mandates, regional organisations and national governments may adopt narrower interpretations, focusing on technical compliance rather than transformative change.²⁴ This can result in gaps in funding, reduced prioritisation of gender-sensitive security measures, and limited support for grassroots women's organisations particularly in regions where cultural norms already constrain women's participation in decision-making.

The Asia-Pacific Region

The WPS agenda in the Asia-Pacific region has gained momentum in recent years, marked by significant policy developments and regional collaboration. A major milestone was the adoption of ASEAN's Regional Plan of Action on WPS in 2022, which provides a framework for member states to integrate gender perspectives into peace and security initiatives.²⁵ Similarly, the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) has embedded WPS principles within its resilience frameworks, reflecting the region's commitment to addressing security challenges through inclusive approaches.²⁶ Through the *Boe Declaration on Regional Security 2018*, the PIF has recognised intersecting regional challenges.²⁷ This includes climate change as the greatest threat to security and livelihoods and expanding the concept of security to include human security, environmental and resource security, transnational crime and cybersecurity.²⁸

The PIF's *Blue Pacific Continent Strategy 2050* outlines Peace and Security as one of the seven key thematic areas which emphasises the importance of regional collaboration to respond to emerging security challenges. Within the Peace and Security thematic area, the Pacific aims to ensure there is full, equal and effective participation of women and girls in all peace processes, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding.²⁹

²² CJ Oudraat and ME Brown, *The WPS agenda beyond 2025: time for a WPS treaty*, Women in International Security (WIIS), November 2025; Hamilton et al., *Twenty Years of Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans: Analysis and Lessons Learned*, p 12.

²³ VF Newby and A O'Malley, 'Introduction: WPS 20 years on: where are the women now?', *Global Studies Quarterly*, 2021, 1(3), doi:10.1093/isagsq/ksab017.

²⁴ Hamilton et al., *Twenty years of women, peace and security national action plans: analysis and lessons learned*.

²⁵ Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), *ASEAN regional plan of action on women, peace and security*, ASEAN, (2022).

²⁶ Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), *2050 strategy for the blue pacific continent*, PIF, 2022; PIF, *Pacific resilience standards, a practitioner's guide*, PIF, 2021.

²⁷ PIF, *Boe declaration on regional security*, PIF website, 05 September 2018, accessed 10 December 2025.

²⁸ PIF, *Boe Declaration on Regional Security*.

²⁹ PIF, *2050 Strategy: implementation plan 2023-2030*, PIF, 2024.

The PIF's most recent guidance note on WPS reinforces this commitment by outlining practical, high-impact recommendations for further integrating WPS principles into regional and national security policy.³⁰ The Pacific also developed a Regional Action Plan for WPS for 2012-2015, however no updated plan has been developed.³¹

At the national level, 14 countries in the Asia-Pacific have developed NAPs to operationalise WPS commitments.³² Regional initiatives such as AMPLIFY, led by the Asia Foundation, and Quad commitments have further strengthened engagement, promoting capacity-building and coordination among governments, civil society, and development partners.³³ These efforts underscore growing recognition of the critical role women play in peacebuilding and conflict prevention across diverse contexts in the region.

Despite these advances, significant gaps remain. Women hold only around 20% of parliamentary seats, the lowest regional average globally, and cultural norms, particularly in parts of the Pacific, continue to limit women's participation in security decision-making.³⁴ These structural and sociocultural barriers highlight the need for sustained investment in gender equality, leadership development, and inclusive governance to fully realise the WPS agenda in the Asia-Pacific.

Australian specific context

The WPS agenda aligns closely with the Minister for Foreign Affairs public statements relating to a peaceful, stable, and inclusive Indo-Pacific.³⁵ Minister Wong has emphasised that Australia's foreign policy must advance gender equality, strengthen regional resilience, and uphold human security as core priorities.³⁶ WPS directly supports these objectives by embedding gender perspectives into conflict prevention, humanitarian response, and governance, ensuring that women are active participants in shaping peace and stability. It also complements Australia's focus on climate adaptation, digital safety, and inclusive economic growth, reinforcing Australia's role as a trusted partner in the region. By integrating WPS into diplomacy, development, and security initiatives, DFAT can deliver on the government's vision for an Indo-Pacific that is secure, prosperous, and equitable.³⁷

The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade is currently conducting an Inquiry into Gender Equality as a National Security and Economic Security Imperative, providing an important opportunity to consider how embedding WPS objectives into Australia's defence, foreign policy, and security frameworks can deliver stronger, more adaptive national security outcomes.³⁸

³⁰ N George and F Iyabora, *Guidance note on women, peace and security (WPS) in the blue pacific continent July 2025*, PIF, 2025.

³¹ Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Peace Women), *Pacific regional action plan, women, peace and security, 2012–2015*, Peace Women, n.d., accessed 10 December 2025.

³² Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network (WPS FPN), *Global map of adopted national action plans*, WPS FPN website, 2025, accessed 10 December 2025.

³³ The Asia Foundation, *The Asia Foundation announces new regional initiative to amplify women's peace actions in ASEAN*, The Asia Foundation website, 22 March 2024, accessed 10 December 2025; DFAT, *The Quad*, DFAT website, 2025, accessed 10 December 2025.

³⁴ Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), *Global and regional averages of women in national parliaments, Global and regional averages*, IPU website, 2025, accessed 10 December 2025.

³⁵ D Lim and H Nelson, *From three strands to four Rs: the evolution of Australian foreign policy*, Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA) website, 21 November 2025, accessed 10 December 2025; P Wong, *AIIA gala dinner keynote address*, Minister for Foreign Affairs, 17 November 2025; P Wong, *International Women's Day parliamentary breakfast* [speech transcript], Minister for Foreign Affairs website, 7 February 2024, accessed 10 December 2025.

³⁶ Lim and Nelson, *From three strands to four Rs: the evolution of Australian foreign policy*; Wong, *International Women's Day parliamentary breakfast*; P Wong, *UN Women International Women's Day Parliamentary Breakfast* [speech transcript], Minister for Foreign Affairs website, 5 February 2026, accessed 10 February 2026.

³⁷ DFAT, *Australia's international development policy*, DFAT, 2023.

³⁸ The Department of the House of Representatives, *New inquiry into gender equality as a national security and economic security imperative*.

Strategic importance of WPS

WPS complements commitments to gender equality under Australia's international development policy and supports objectives in foreign affairs, defence, and humanitarian response.³⁹ WPS reinforces national security strategies by embedding gender perspectives into conflict prevention and crisis management, while linking to climate adaptation and disaster resilience priorities through agencies such as NEMA. It also aligns with cyber and e-safety agendas by addressing gendered disinformation and online harms, ensuring women's participation in digital spaces. By integrating WPS into trade, diplomacy, and security frameworks, the program aims to deliver on Australia's broader goals of promoting peace, prosperity, and human rights through a coordinated, whole-of-government approach.

Peace and stability are more sustainable when women are actively involved in security decision-making.⁴⁰ National security outcomes are closely linked to the WPS Agenda. Research shows that countries with higher levels of gender equality experience lower rates of conflict and greater resilience to crises.⁴¹ Including women in peace negotiations significantly increases the likelihood that agreements will be implemented and endure over time.⁴² WPS principles such as participation, protection, and prevention, aim to strengthen national security by improving governance, reducing violence, and fostering inclusive institutions.

³⁹ DFAT, *Australia's international development policy*.

⁴⁰ J Krause, W Krause and P Bränfors, 'Women's participation in peace negotiations and the durability of peace', *International Interactions*, 2018, 44(6):985-1016, doi:10.1080/03050629.2018.1492386; UN, *Women, peace and security: advancing equality and building peace*, UN website, 2025, accessed 23 December 2025.

⁴¹ Georgetown Institute for WPS and The Peace Research Institute Oslo, *Women, peace and security index 2023/24*, GIWPS and PRIO, 2023; Our Secure Future, *Making the case for women, peace and security: evidence and country examples*, OSF, 2024.

⁴² Coomaraswamy, *Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing the peace: a global study on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*.

Australia's WPS Approach in Comparison to International Peers

Australia's Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2021–2031 positions Australia as a globally engaged, predominantly internationally oriented WPS actor, with implementation driven by DFAT and cross agency coordination. When compared with international peers such as Japan, the UK, Canada and the Philippines, clear differences emerge in strategic design, domestic integration, M&E and leadership priorities. Refer to [Appendix B: International Comparator Analysis](#), for a more detailed summary of each country's NAP.

Japan

Japan's third NAP (2023–2028) departs from traditional UNSCR 1325 four pillar structures and instead adopts an initiative-based design, intentionally simplifying indicators to improve usability for implementing ministries.⁴³ Japan's NAP does not outline any priority countries and instead broadly targets conflict-affected countries and fragile states, with a particular emphasis on disaster mitigation, recovery, and risk reduction.

Key lessons that can be drawn from Japan's NAP include an explicit divide between domestic and international commitments with separate measures for each. Some domestic measures include establishing gender officers within each ministry, strengthening human rights protections for all women in Japan, including those who are not citizens, and expanding training across ministries. Regarding M&E, Japan utilises an evaluation committee that is made up of external experts that consult with international non-government organisations (NGOs) and civil society. Japan submits annual reports on implementation that are evaluated by the external experts, and the Evaluation Committee can recommend revisions to the Action Plan and its goals, measures and indicators.

United Kingdom

The UK's fifth NAP (2023–2027) represents a more expansive and highly institutionalised model. It introduces strengthened governance structures, a focus-country model spanning 12 priority contexts, and, for the first time in the UK, domestic WPS commitments.⁴⁴ These include largescale investments in violence prevention, expanded support for survivors, and initiatives to increase women's participation in defence and diplomacy. For the UK, WPS sits under the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's conflict prevention structures rather than their gender equality and development teams. There is an All-Party Parliamentary Group on WPS and a Minister serving as the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict. The UK's approach to accountability is notably robust. It includes parliamentary reporting every two years, dedicated baseline studies, midterm and final evaluations, and whole-of-government boards overseeing delivery. The result is a system with strong transparency, high visibility of progress, and clearly delineated responsibilities.

Canada

Implemented by 10 federal partners, Canada's third NAP (2023–2029) extends beyond the scope of the UN Security Council resolutions, adopting a thematic structure organised around six focus areas.⁴⁵ The Canadian NAP distinguishes itself through a strong intersectional and explicitly anti-racist positioning,

⁴³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *National action plan on women, peace and security*, Government of Japan, 2023.

⁴⁴ UK Government, *UK women, peace and security national action plan 2023-2027*, UK Government, 2023.

⁴⁵ Government of Canada, *Canada's national action plan on women, peace and security*, Government of Canada, 2024.

formalised civil society and Indigenous partnerships via a co-chaired advisory group, and explicit integration of domestic priorities such as addressing technology-facilitated GBV and implementing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls National Action Plan. Canada's approach to M&E emphasises feminist methodologies, prioritising qualitative impact and adaptive learning over activity counts. In addition to being the first country in the world to appoint an ambassador for WPS, the Canadian NAP is supported by annual parliamentary reporting and a dedicated government coordination hub at Global Affairs Canada. While less prescriptive than the UK's focus country model, Canada's NAP positions inclusion and institutional capacity-building as central to its leadership strategy, aiming to mainstream WPS across government and strengthen accountability through collaborative governance.

Philippines

The Philippines' fourth generation NAP (2023-2033) maintains a domestic focus, structured around two core pillars of participation and protection, and two support pillars of mainstreaming and monitoring.⁴⁶ The Philippines' M&E architecture advances beyond conventional practice to a comprehensive MEAL system that mandates annual public reporting, triennial multi-stakeholder mid-term reviews, a terminal evaluation, and the development of a consolidated national WPS database with minimum sex, age and disability disaggregated data. Produced in accordance with the NAP M&E roadmap, midterm outcomes and associated indicators are extensively outlined in the separate Indicator Handbook.⁴⁷ The Philippine NAP proactively operates on a renewed commitment to address the root causes of conflict, especially as they intersect with new and emerging priorities such as local armed conflicts, climate change, engaging diverse populations, cybersecurity, and the role of women in normalisation processes. The NAP is underpinned by a whole-of-government coordination model led by the National Steering Committee on WPS, which brings together key national agencies and mandates integration of WPS commitments across all levels of government.

Australia

Against this backdrop, Australia performs strongly on alignment with global WPS principles but shows opportunities for refinement. Compared with Japan, the UK, and the Philippines, Australia's M&E framework is less formalised. Although progress reporting and independent reviews exist, including interim assessments of earlier NAPs, they do not match the UK's robust, multi-level evaluation cycle or its explicit parliamentary oversight and actionable, quantitative indicators. Australia could consider implementing an external evaluation committee similar to Japan, that leverages experts from academia, NGOs and civil society.

Australia's domestic dimension also differs significantly. Whereas Japan, Canada, the Philippines, and the UK embed clear domestic reforms within their NAPs, Australia's domestic integration is more limited, reflecting its focus on international peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance, and multilateral engagement.

⁴⁶ Office of the Presidential Advisor on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity, *Philippine national action plan on women, peace and security 2023-2033*, OPAPRU, 2023.

⁴⁷ OPAPRU, *Indicator handbook for the Philippine national action plan on women, peace and security 2023-2033*, OPAPRU, 2024.

This provides Australia with strong international credibility, supported by contributions to peacekeeping, humanitarian financing, and global WPS mechanisms. However, it also limits opportunities to demonstrate domestic system change comparable to UK initiatives such as its Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy or Japan's ministry level gender mainstreaming reforms.

Australia's international engagement profile differs from peers. Unlike the UK's explicitly identified twelve focus countries or Japan's conflict affected country emphasis, Australia's NAP broadly applies to the Indo-Pacific. Australia's WPS leadership is instead expressed through multilateral engagement, funding partnerships, and institutional advocacy. While this supports wide engagement, adopting focus country or thematic targeting could enhance measurement, accountability, and diplomatic influence.

Overall, Australia's WPS approach is principled and globally engaged, but opportunities exist to strengthen domestic commitments and governmental coordination, adopt more actionable indicators, establish a more structured M&E cycle, and consider more targeted initiatives within the Southeast Asia and Pacific Islands region.

Progress Against Outcomes

This section analyses the progress of outcomes and objectives against the four pillars of Australia's NAP. This analysis was informed by quantitative and qualitative data captured through progress reporting, strategy and policy guidance, review of contemporary literature and insights from stakeholder consultations. For a more detailed methodology of the review framework, refer to [Appendix A](#).

The WPS NAP is structured with pillars, outcomes and objectives. The four pillars that underpin Australia's WPS agenda include:

- Preventing conflict and sexual and gender-based violence in fragile and conflict-affected contexts,
- Promoting women's full and meaningful participation, and gender equality in peace and security decision-making processes,
- Protecting human rights, including reducing sexual and gender-based violence, and
- Meeting the needs of women and girls and reinforcing their agency in relief and recovery efforts.⁴⁸

The NAP then identifies four key outcomes to guide Australia's international efforts in WPS, which are supported by medium-term objectives. The four outcomes are:

- Support women and girls' meaningful participation and needs in conflict prevention and peace processes,
- Reduce sexual and gender-based violence,
- Support resilience, crisis response, and security, law and justice sector efforts to meet the needs and rights of women and girls, and
- Demonstrate leadership and accountability for the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

As the M&E framework does not require departments and organisations to provide quantitative data against measures and objectives, progress is primarily measured through activities completed under the objectives. The independent mid-term review analysed progress against outcomes and mid-term objectives, based on case studies, qualitative data and consultation insights provided by the implementing agencies, investment partners and civil society.

The snapshot summaries provided under each outcome in this report offer a high-level overview of selective WPS activities undertaken by implementing partners. They are intended as illustrative highlights and should not be regarded as a comprehensive account of all activities conducted.

⁴⁸ DFAT, *Australian national action plan on women, peace and security (2021-2031)*.

Outcome 1. Supporting Women’s Meaningful Participation and Needs in Peace Processes

This outcome focuses on increasing women’s involvement in conflict prevention and peace processes. It aims to enhance women’s representation in public institutions, peace negotiations, and ensure peace agreements reflect gender priorities.

Snapshot summary highlighting progress towards medium term objectives

1.1 Increase women’s meaningful participation in conflict prevention.

- The Pacific Women Mediators Network (PWMN) influenced the Ocean of Peace Declaration to embed gender, peace and security commitments, enabled through dedicated funding support.
- The AFP has facilitated leadership and technical training for women in police from across the Asia-Pacific region and in South Africa. The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force and AFP Policing Partnership Program has provided mentoring and coaching to 21 women since September 2023.
- Since 2021, the Australian Border Force (ABF) has delivered Women’s Professional Development Programs to 192 women working for customs authorities across 30 Asia-Pacific countries, which develop leadership capability for women in customs leadership roles.

1.2 Increase women’s meaningful participation in peace processes.

- Funding provided for the Southeast Asian Women Peace Mediators (SEAWPM) who facilitated the Tuban Process between East Timor and displaced groups in West Timor.
- Australia supported the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue to establish the ‘Bae Mediators Group’ in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) (August 2024), comprising 35 women peace mediators. Since formation, they have handled six community conflicts and successfully settled four, earning First Place in the UN Women Asia Pacific Civil Society Peace Award (June 2025).

DFAT’s Annual Investment Monitoring Report (AIMR) 2025 demonstrates strong progress against Objective One – *supporting women’s meaningful participation and needs in peace processes*. The report shows that the investment is highly aligned with End of Program Outcome 1, with tangible evidence of women influencing peace and security processes across Asia, the Pacific, and beyond. Through Australia’s support of UN Women, this has facilitated support for new and updated WPS NAPs in Vietnam, Timor-Leste and the Philippines, along with ongoing technical support across the region. This illustrates how institutional frameworks have been strengthened to embed women’s participation in peace and conflict prevention systems. Likewise, regional networks such as the SEAWPM and the PWMN are creating concrete and visible pathways for women to shape early warning, mediation, and diplomatic engagement.

The AIMR demonstrates that participation is not only occurring but is substantive. SEAWPM’s advisory role to Malaysia’s ASEAN Envoy Team, PWMN’s influence on the Pacific Troika Mission and Fiji’s WPS NAP, and ActionAid’s support to African networks on CRSV illustrate women playing agenda-setting and decision-shaping roles. These examples substantiate claims of “meaningful” participation, showing real influence on peace processes and policymaking rather than simple representation.

The following case study provides insight into how Australia has supported the development of regional women's peace mediator networks including the SEAWPM and the PWMN. These women peace mediator networks' successes demonstrate how empowering local, culturally embedded networks can enable gender-responsive peacebuilding, offering contextually driven, innovative advances to the WPS agenda.

Case Study: Australia's support for women peace mediators in the Asia-Pacific

Launched in Fiji in June 2023, PWMN strengthens Pacific Islander women's leadership in peacebuilding, political mediation and multilateral advocacy. The network bridges silos between climate, disaster risk reduction (DRR), and security agendas, influencing the PIF to embed gender perspectives in the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. Since inception, PWMN has convened six regional meetings and an inaugural colloquium in the Solomon Islands, engaging 64 women mediators and over 250 local peacebuilders, and reaching more than 2,000 policymakers. Its impact includes briefing Forum Leaders, securing language on women mediators in communiqués, contributing to UN Security Council debates and developing a Pacific-led Gender, Peace, Security and Development Certificate Course.

The SEAWPM is a platform of Southeast Asian women engaged in mediating, negotiating and facilitating peace processes with the purpose to facilitate and engage in efforts aimed at preventing or resolving the escalation of violent conflicts. SEAWPM adopts a quiet diplomacy and trauma-informed approach to facilitating dialogue between conflict parties, offering trusted accompaniment in some of the world's most complex and protracted conflicts. As an independent yet complementary organisation to ASEAN, SEAWPM is uniquely placed to accompany ASEAN as a mechanism for advancing the role of women in responding to emerging opportunities for mediation and the facilitation of peace processes in the Southeast Asian region. Leveraging trust developed through local and regional relationships, SEAWPM is agile and sensitive to the distinct needs of communities.

Case Study: Advancing gender-equality in peace processes through the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

Australia provides extrabudgetary funding to the United Nations' IAEA which supports flagship gender equality initiatives. Focused on our partners in the Indo-Pacific, this support aims to build equal and effective representation and leadership of women in discussions on peace and security.

The programs seek to attract and retain women professionals in the sector and support the development of indigenous national capacity to facilitate involvement in UN nuclear discussions.

Australia provides funding for the Marie Sklodowska-Curie Fellowship Program to encourage women to pursue a career in nuclear science and technology, nuclear safety and security, non-proliferation or nuclear law. This program has supported fellowships for 61 women, with at least three women from the Pacific Islands.

Australia's funding for the Lise Meitner Program will support 24 early- and mid-career women professionals from Indo-Pacific region countries to participate in a multiweek visiting professional program at Australia's nuclear facilities and advance their technical and soft skills.



Finding 1

Finding 1. Strong progress toward women’s meaningful participation, driven by regional networks and institutional strengthening is evident

Regional women’s mediator networks and partnerships with UN Women have enhanced women’s role in peace processes across Southeast Asia and the Pacific, supporting agenda setting, dispute resolution, and normative change. However, civil society stakeholders recognised there are opportunities for Australia to strengthen efforts and support for humanitarian crises globally.

Australia’s support for WPS in Afghanistan

Australia’s role under the CEDAW places clear obligations on the government to advance and protect the rights of women and girls, including those in conflict and crisis contexts such as Afghanistan. Participants emphasised that, as a CEDAW state party, Australia has a responsibility to support Afghan women’s meaningful participation in peace processes and to address the severe restrictions currently imposed on their rights. This requires building domestic capacity for women within Afghanistan, alongside supporting Afghan women living outside the country who may later return with strengthened skills and leadership capability. Stakeholders also noted that although Australia continues to engage in Afghanistan through longstanding operational and humanitarian partnerships, much of this work, particularly efforts led by Home Affairs and other agencies to support Afghan women and local organisations, is not captured in current WPS NAP reporting.

Civil society stakeholders also advised that Australia could better engage Afghan diaspora in Australia by building more community-level networks to provide better support to both Afghan women that relocate to Australia, and to provide ongoing support for those already in Australia. Bringing this work into the reporting framework would better reflect Australia’s CEDAW aligned responsibilities and demonstrate its continued commitment to upholding women’s rights in one of the world’s most restrictive environments.

Climate Change

Women are disproportionately affected by displacement and the rise of conflict post-climate disaster.⁴⁹ Climate change emerged as a consistently raised issue across consultations, with partners emphasising that climate change is now inseparable from peace, security, and gendered vulnerability. Stakeholders highlighted that Pacific and Southeast Asian communities are already experiencing forced relocation due to rising sea levels and climate driven displacement, ecological loss, and emerging protection risks, which can create tension when displaced groups move into others’ traditional lands. These dynamics underscore the need for a stronger climate-security lens in WPS work, as relocation can trigger disputes over land rights, cultural identity and livelihoods. Feedback from implementing partners indicated that as climate impacts intensify, peace mediators will need to increasingly consider how they address conflict prevention in the context of climate-induced displacement and supporting communities that experience loss and damage.

⁴⁹ Care, *Evicted by climate change: confronting the gendered impacts of climate-induced displacement*; UN Women, *Women suffer the most from climate displacement*, UN Women: Women’s Resilience to Disasters Knowledge Hub website, UN Women, 13 July 2020, accessed 9 December 2025.

Participants stressed that Australia must better integrate climate, gender, and security across the NAP, noting that current government and multilateral systems often treat these as siloed domains. Civil society, particularly Pacific and Southeast Asia women mediators, emphasised that climate impacts are deeply connected to human security, identity, and conflict prevention, and that women peacebuilders play a critical role in mediating community level tensions linked to climate related loss and damage. They urged Australia to elevate climate security as a core WPS priority and to support locally led, approaches that reflect lived experience in climate affected communities.

Areas for further development

Overall, the AIMR positions outcome one as a strong area of performance, with clear evidence of impact through regional networks, technical leadership, and institutional strengthening. With greater clarity on definitions and more explicit analysis of barriers, the narrative could more sharply convey the investment's contribution to system level change in women's roles in peace processes.

To strengthen outcome one further, the AIMR would benefit from more explicit articulation of what "meaningful participation" means in measurable terms. While the report provides rich qualitative examples, defining clear indicators such as leadership roles held, influence on decisions, or policy changes resulting from women's engagement would improve evaluability of objectives against outcome one. Additionally, the report could more directly connect persistent barriers (including shrinking civic space, safety threats to women human rights defenders, and reliance on DFAT as a sole funder for several partners) to the challenges of achieving deeper structural change in participation. These risks are acknowledged in other sections of the report but could be brought forward to contextualise progress against outcome one.

Outcome 2. Reducing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

Targeting systemic and harmful gender norms, this outcome seeks to lessen violence against women and girls. It includes measures to improve safety, access to justice, and strengthen legal frameworks addressing SGBV.

Snapshot summary highlighting progress towards medium term objectives

2.1: Reduce harmful gender norms

- Through the Pacific Community for Law Enforcement Cooperation, the AFP supported gender diversity training in the Northern Mariana Islands, improving police engagement with LGBTQIA+ communities.
- Australia supports the Pacific Women Lead program which has trained over 1,500 male advocates and engaged law enforcement to challenge harmful masculinities. In 2025 alone, more than 35,000 people participated in activities promoting women's rights and respectful relationships.
- Home Affairs funds the Australian Cultural Orientation Program (AUSCO) through the International Organisation for Migration. This program is offered to refugee and special humanitarian program entrants and supports women's safety by providing information on Australian law pertaining to gender equality, violence, sexual assault and forced marriages. This was accessed by 21,556 people between July 2023 and June 2025.

2.2: Increase safety and security for women and girls.

- AFP supports a variety of efforts to tackle cybercrime in the Asia-Pacific region, with emphasis on responding to technology facilitated SGBV. The AFP has provided advisory support to the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force Sexual Assault team to address online abuse and sexual assault.
- The Pacific Response Group's Pacific Special Advisory Team is a Brisbane based team that is readily deployable to support civilian-led disaster response planning. All of its members completed the ADF's Gender Focal Point (GFP) course which strengthened understanding of how to integrate gender perspectives into operations.
- Home Affairs is providing domestic and family violence support for refugee and vulnerable women through the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support Program. This program provides specialised services including crisis intervention, legal education and respectful relationship training and has been delivered to more than 3800 individuals – 83 per cent of whom were women.

2.3: Increase access to justice for victims and survivors of SGBV

- In partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Women, UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and the Government of Vietnam, Australia is supporting the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children in Vietnam Program which strengthens coordinated prevention, response, and legal reform efforts. This resulted in the revision on Vietnam's Domestic Violence and Prevention Law which introduced protection orders.
- The Papua New Guinea Women Lead program established four crisis support centres delivering integrated, survivor-centred services to over 5,500 survivors. This included medical care, legal and policing support, safe housing, counselling and economic empowerment tools.

Across consultations, stakeholders acknowledged that while reducing SGBV remains a core pillar of the WPS agenda, progress is uneven and fragmented, with many established programs and efforts, but it is not consistently captured or coordinated under the NAP. Agencies highlighted ongoing work in family violence, trafficking, and technology facilitated GBV, including specialist programs in the Pacific and new regional postings focused on strengthening responses to domestic and gender-based violence.

Several participants also highlighted that GBV related work undertaken by agencies like Home Affairs is not currently reflected in NAP reporting, meaning contributions to SGBV prevention and survivor support are under recognised, and opportunities for a more coordinated whole-of-government response remain unrealised.

Reducing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in diaspora communities within Australia

Implemented by the Home Affairs, the Women at Risk visa program is a resettlement pathway for women refugees in vulnerable situations and their dependents. Eligibility extends to individuals who face persecution, are registered as persons of concern with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and who lack the protection of a male relative or are otherwise at heightened risk of GBV.

Between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2025, the program facilitated the approval of 1,733 offshore humanitarian visas, accounting for approximately 5% of all offshore humanitarian visas issued during this period.⁵⁰ The principal countries of origin included Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Venezuela, Syria, and Somalia. Support for recipients extended beyond the initial intake program with Women at Risk visa recipients representing the most significant user group of the Adult Migrant English Program and the free interpreting services offered by Home Affairs, improving access to essential legal, health, and social services.⁵¹ This targeted resettlement initiative reflects Australia's commitment under its WPS NAP to protect women in conflict-affected contexts and reduce the risks of SGBV through safe migration pathways and sustained integration support.

Finding 2

Finding 2. Progress made toward reducing sexual and gender-based violence is uneven and not consistently captured across agencies

Australia funds and delivers SGBV prevention and response initiatives (e.g., AFP regional programs and Home Affairs' Women at Risk visa scheme), but these are not fully reported within the NAP framework. Fragmentation, inconsistent coordination, limited data collection mechanisms and under recognition of frontline civil society contributions limit the ability to assess national progress. Best practice also emphasises the importance of creating formal avenues for survivors of CRSV to inform and influence policy; however, Australia does not currently have structured mechanisms to ensure CRSV survivor voices are integrated into the design, monitoring, and evaluation of these initiatives.

⁵⁰ DFAT, *Draft WPS report 2023-2025* [internal document], 2025.

⁵¹ DFAT, *Draft WPS report 2023-2025*.

Weaponisation of gender

Feedback across all consultation and stakeholder groups noted that gender is being “weaponised” through narratives and ideology. Specifically, the portrayal of gender equality and leadership as threats to social order, using these narratives to justify restrictions on civic space, roll back legal protections, or defund organisations working on gender justice. In this way, gender becomes a symbolic battleground for competing political agendas, with regressive actors using it to mobilise support, divide communities, or undermine democratic processes. Institutional, legal, and economic systems can further entrench this weaponisation. When women’s access to justice, political representation, or economic autonomy is systematically restricted, these limitations function as tools of control that prevent individuals from exercising power or seeking accountability. Likewise, the failure to address SGBV, or the normalisation of impunity, reinforces gender as a tool of coercion and dominance.

Multiple agencies and civil society partners explicitly identified mis- and disinformation as a growing threat that intersects with gender, civic space, and security. For example, Home Affairs confirmed that disinformation is a challenge they are monitoring, noting its links to social cohesion and emerging security threats. The AFP and Pacific policing partners are already attempting to counter misinformation through proactive transparency, including posting information to counter rumours in small society contexts.

Several consultations described how online misinformation and gendered attacks weaken participation of women and WPS actors. Civil society reported serious backlash online, including coordinated online hostility targeting language and rights-based terminology. This limits the safety and visibility of activists. Civil society noted that closing civic space and mis- and disinformation make it harder for women’s voices to influence government, with risk of consultations becoming performative rather than impactful. Civil society warned that mis- and disinformation creates divisions in society, disrupts peacebuilding, and requires resourcing to counter its impacts both domestically and internationally.

In Senate estimates the AFP Commissioner stated that ‘many countries share significant concerns about youth, who are becoming victims and perpetrators through online radicalisation, sextortion and corrupted masculinity.’⁵² Consultations echoed these concerns, with stakeholders highlighting the growing influence of extremist online content and the risks it poses to young people, particularly young men. Stakeholders emphasised that these dynamics, including the rise of toxic masculinity, have direct implications for the WPS agenda. They noted that harmful online narratives can exacerbate gendered insecurity, fuel violence, and undermine efforts to promote women’s participation, safety, and leadership. As such, the WPS agenda must not only focus on the protection and empowerment of women and girls but also address the broader gendered drivers of insecurity, including toxic masculinity and its impacts on community cohesion and stability.

Areas for further development

Civil society organisations outlined the need for greater involvement of civil society in crisis settings, as they are best placed to assist with inclusive approaches to relief and recovery in crisis, particularly in relation to sexual violence. Civil society also emphasised that they are often delivering frontline support in high-risk contexts such as the African Women’s Voices for Peace Network and PWMN, yet noted that government engagement and resourcing can be inconsistent.

⁵² K Barrett, *AFP Commissioner Krissy Barrett: Senate Estimates Opening Statement* [speech], AFP, 2 December 2025, accessed 16 February 2026

This limits their ability to scale evidence-based approaches or respond to escalating GBV during crises. Stakeholders indicated that climate-induced and natural disasters can amplify displacement and subsequently, GBV risks, including trafficking and sexual exploitation, underscoring a greater need for SGBV considerations to be embedded in disaster response planning.

Civil society raised concerns that GBV in conflict settings such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, and Uganda remains severe, and stressed that Australia should do more to proactively integrate sexual and GBV prevention across humanitarian, security, and peacebuilding efforts.

Through ActionAid, DFAT has supported the establishment of the African Women Voices for Peace platform, which helps to elevate the voices of women survivors of CRSV in national and regional policy spaces. Civil society stakeholders commented that this platform was an effective way to amplify survivor voices, although more could be done to strengthen survivor-centred work through the NAP. DFAT has supported Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) to establish the Gender Justice Practitioner Hub to foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing amongst practitioners globally to ensure better gender justice outcomes for survivors of international crimes. While an important initiative, stakeholders have commented that Australia's support could expand beyond these initiatives to consider more proactively prosecuting international crimes under Australia's legal frameworks, focusing on conflict-related sexual violence and gender justice.

Emerging threats were also identified, including technology-facilitated GBV, online harassment, and gendered disinformation campaigns that target women leaders. Stakeholders called for collaboration with e-Safety regulators and technology companies to counter these harms and safeguard women's voices in digital spaces.



Finding 3

Finding 3. NAP implementation on CRSV lacks sufficient whole-of-government coordination, survivor engagement, and integration across security and humanitarian domains

Despite CRSV being a core priority of the NAP, consultations highlighted significant gaps in coordination, consistency, and capability across agencies involved in NAP delivery.

Stakeholders noted that CRSV is often treated as a peripheral or specialised issue rather than integrated into Australia's broader conflict prevention, stabilisation, peacebuilding, humanitarian, and security efforts. In addition, Australia does not yet have structured mechanisms for survivor centred engagement, limiting the extent to which CRSV survivors (including women, men, gender-diverse people and children) and frontline women's organisations can shape policy, influence early warning systems, or guide accountability efforts. There is also opportunity to consider embedding a transitional justice-based approach and reparations-oriented approach into humanitarian settings and Australia's WPS activities. Civil society stakeholders emphasised that Australia could become a leader in prosecuting CRSV crimes. This would build on from Australia's action to hold Afghanistan to account for violating the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and DFAT's support for the Australian Institute for International Affairs and the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Elimination of Violence against Women to host an international conference on CRSV in 2025.

Opportunities also exist to better align the NAP's international CRSV commitments with Australia's domestic agenda on SGBV. While both policy domains share common principles such as trauma informed practice, prevention, and accountability, current linkages are inconsistent and underutilised, missing opportunities to leverage shared investments, expertise, and evidence.⁵³

Without strengthened whole of government coordination, clearer integration across security and humanitarian mandates, and more systematic survivor engagement, Australia's ability to deliver on its CRSV obligations under the NAP and to maintain credibility in regional and multilateral WPS leadership will remain constrained.

⁵³ Department of Social Services, *National plan to end violence against women and children 2022 – 2023*, DSS, 2022.

Outcome 3: Supporting Resilience, Crisis Response, and Security, Law and Justice Efforts

This outcome boosts efforts to meet the security and rights needs of women and girls in crisis, humanitarian, and justice settings. It encompasses law enforcement, antitrafficking, humanitarian assistance, stabilisation, and disaster management initiatives.

Snapshot summary highlighting progress towards medium term objectives

3.1 Increase access to security, law and justice responses

- DFAT supported justice reform through the Fostering Advancement of Inclusive and Rights-Based Justice (FAIR) Program in the Philippines, which developed a manual and protocol for handling women's legal cases, and was aligned to the Bangkok Rules on the Treatment of Women Prisoners. These resources provided trauma-informed approaches to healthcare, case tracking and non-custodial methods.
- The Australia Indonesia Partnership for Justice has significantly enhanced access to justice for women and girls in Indonesia by addressing gaps in legal protections, service delivery, and rights awareness. Key progress includes the Supreme Court Regulation No. 3/2017, ensuring fair treatment of women in judicial processes, and the enactment of Qanun No. 4/2025 in Aceh, embedding women's rights in religious law and providing protections for divorced women, disaster-affected women, and survivors of human rights violations.

3.2: Increase access to humanitarian action, stabilisation and disaster management.

- Supported the UNFPA Regional Prepositioning Initiative to provide sexual and reproductive health and GBV supplies across Indo-Pacific countries when they experience disasters. In 2024, the initiative provided supplies to more than 30,000 people across 35 emergencies including for older women in Myanmar and survivors of sorcery-related violence in PNG.
- Supported the World Food Programme initiative in Myanmar that engaged women as volunteers and distribution agents to foster culturally sensitive communication and strengthen women's resilience and food security.
- Australia supported the Shifting the Power Coalition through Pacific Women Lead to promote Pacific women's leadership in climate and humanitarian action and disaster response. Programs in Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, and Fiji have trained women human rights defenders, strengthened trauma-informed peacebuilding, and embedded women's leadership in early warning systems.

Australia's efforts to support resilience, crisis response, and security, law and justice systems are strengthening through a combination of global norm shaping, regional partnerships, and targeted investment in women led crisis architectures. The Gender Justice Practitioners Hub, is already shifting the international accountability landscape. For example, following its establishment, the International Criminal Court's Office of the Prosecutor committed to developing publicly available principles on the crime of gender persecution, marking a significant step forward in survivor-centred justice.

Case Study: Pacific Response Group Gender Focal Point (GFP) Course

The Pacific Response Group's Pacific Special Advisory Team (PSAT) became operational in 2024, supporting civilian authorities' disaster response planning as a small, rapidly deployable team. Consisting of members from the Australian Defence Force (ADF), French Armed Forces, His Majesties Armed Forces (Tonga), the Papua New Guinean Defence Force, and the Republic of Fiji Military Forces, this diverse and highly skilled team further expanded their capabilities, strengthening regional interoperability by undertaking the ADF's GFP Course. Conducted in-person, the training was positively received by participants who said they looked forward to opportunities to apply their new knowledge and skills as qualified GFPs in their current and future posts.

In executing the GFP Course for the PSAT, the importance of adapting content to the relevant regional context, fostering shared values to build trust amongst course participants, and providing equitable access to resources through localised materials was affirmed. Ending with a collaborative session to identify practical applications of WPS principles proved critical for participant engagement and ownership of their role in supporting the implementation of the WPS agenda through their disaster response planning work in the Pacific.

Linking WPS to operational effectiveness

In consultations with the AFP, a consistent theme emerged, people buy into the WPS agenda when they see clear operational effect. AFP officers noted that WPS gains traction not as an abstract policy commitment, but when frontline teams witness how women's participation improves intelligence flows, strengthens community trust, and leads to more sustainable security outcomes. Several practitioners emphasised that integrating WPS has repeatedly produced operational advantages in complex environments especially in international operations, human trafficking and child protection.

“WPS becomes real for our people when they see it helps de-escalate tensions faster, opens doors we couldn't access before, and ultimately makes missions safer and more effective.”

- WPS Implementing Partner

WPS as part of Australia's broader security posture

During consultations, WPS was often treated as an adjunct to the development program rather than as a core component of Australia's broader peace and security posture. This limits its strategic impact and reinforces the perception that WPS is primarily a social-development or gender-mainstreaming add-on, rather than a framework explicitly rooted in conflict prevention, national security objectives, and geopolitical engagement. A more security-focused approach embedded across Australian Government agencies and at post would align with the recognised role of WPS in enhancing conflict prevention, strengthening diplomatic and defence partnerships, and improving Australia's strategic influence in regions such as Southeast Asia.

International guidance underscores that WPS is central to peace and security decision-making, with the UN and major partners emphasising its value for effective conflict prevention and mission success. At a program level, elevating WPS from a development-led initiative to a whole-of-government security priority, posts can better integrate gendered intelligence, early warning, stabilisation planning, and strategic engagement ensuring Australia leverages the full utility of WPS in advancing its national interests.

Positioning WPS within the national security agenda is key to elevating its strategic importance and securing its recognition as a national priority. However, civil society cautioned about taking a securitised and militarised approach in the Asia-Pacific region. Framing WPS within a securitised context can create institutionalised barriers to women's leadership at senior levels, as it tends to channel effort toward increasing women's participation in militarised or securitised institutions, such as increasing defence or police recruits, where women are currently under-represented. Civil society stakeholders suggested that in such contexts, development-focused ministries and organisations, where women's leadership is more established, may be well positioned to advance the full breadth of the WPS agenda in ways that align with local cultural and institutional realities. Stakeholders emphasised that inclusive governance arrangements that prioritise women's leadership and meaningful engagement is critical to conflict prevention.



Finding 4

Finding 4. Australia's WPS architecture requires a strategic shift from a development centred model to a security integrated approach

Consultations highlighted that WPS is still perceived internally as a development or organisational culture issue rather than part of Australia's core foreign policy, security strategy, and geopolitical posture. Integrating WPS into a whole-of-government priority focusing on conflict prevention, cyber policy, climate security, crisis response architectures, and peacebuilding is critical to remain credible in an increasingly contested Indo Pacific. Such integration is not only essential for Australia's credibility but also for the overall effectiveness and impact of its foreign and security policy.

Areas for further development

AustraliSa has also bolstered local resilience and humanitarian action through its contribution of \$8 million to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF), enabling 188 new grants supporting 293 civil society organisations. 89 per cent of these grants operate at local and subnational levels, directly resourcing women led relief, recovery, and stabilisation efforts. Alongside these global investments, consultation feedback highlights the expanding pressures of climate impacts, digital harms, displacement, and technology facilitated GBV across the Indo-Pacific. AFP, Home Affairs, Defence and ACMC all engaged in operational and capacity building initiatives that strengthen crisis response and justice outcomes on the ground. However, many of these activities remain under recognised in current NAP reporting, signalling the need for improved whole-of-government coordination and data capture to ensure Australia's contributions to resilience, crisis response, and gender responsive justice systems are fully reflected and leveraged in future planning.



Finding 5

Finding 5. Climate, regional and national security, cyber harms, and mis- and disinformation have become major WPS challenges but are not fully integrated into NAP implementation

Stakeholders consistently identified climate change, displacement, gendered online harms, and mis- and disinformation as escalating threats to women's participation, safety, and cohesion. These crosscutting issues are central to regional and national security but insufficiently embedded in current WPS programming, governance, and indicators.

Outcome 4: Demonstrating Leadership and Accountability for WPS

Australia commits to global leadership on WPS and ensuring a results-driven approach. This includes strengthening partnerships with civil society, enhancing evidence-based programming, and reinforcing whole-of-government responsibility.

Snapshot summary highlighting progress towards medium term objectives

4.1 The Australian Government demonstrates commitment to, and leadership of, the WPS agenda.

- In 2024, the Foreign Minister, together with her Canadian, Dutch and German counterparts, announced a joint legal initiative to hold Afghanistan to account for violations of the CEDAW.
- DFAT supported the Australian Civil Society Coalition on WPS to convene 60 civil society leaders from 18 countries across the Asia-Pacific region to review progress on the WPS agenda from the past 25 years. Insights from this Regional Convening formed a set of key recommendations for how national governments can better advance the WPS agenda.⁴⁹

4.2 The Australian Government demonstrates effective accountability for its WPS efforts.

- The ACMC holds an annual Government – Civil Society Dialogue to discuss the WPS agenda and progress against the NAP. 120 people attended (30 per cent Government and 70 per cent civil society) and discussed emerging issues such as climate change and queer-inclusive WPS approaches. However, it is unclear how the dialogue practically advances WPS policy or progresses NAP implementation.
- Defence established a biannual Gender, Peace and Security (GPS) Steering Group in 2024. Defence also conducted an internal audit to assess progress of implementation against the NAP.
- Home Affairs is working towards the delivery of a new Home Affairs Implementation Plan for 2025-2027, conducting widespread consultation and awareness raising across the department to drive diverse business areas' knowledge of and engagement with the WPS agenda.

4.3 Australia's efforts to support the WPS agenda are harmonised

- Defence continues to work towards the inclusion of GENADs, GFPs and a gender balance in the deployed force composition on operations, exercises and planning groups.

Australia's leadership and accountability for the WPS agenda is recognised across partners, but consultations highlight the need for a more coherent, system-wide approach to sustain and strengthen this role. Agencies described Australia as a trusted and principled actor, particularly in the Pacific and Southeast Asia, valued for its longstanding support to women peacebuilders, mediation networks, and civil society, and for investing in mechanisms such as the WPS Coalition dialogues, PWMN, and global gender justice initiatives. Notably, stakeholders acknowledged the critical role that WPS engagement plays in supporting security relationships around the globe, with WPS often recognised as a trusted entry point for collaboration or discussions regarding broader security strategy. This was identified as an unintended benefit of WPS. Yet partners also noted growing expectations of Australia to lead by example, including by addressing policy coherence gaps, strengthening whole-of-government coordination, and ensuring domestic and international commitments align, especially in areas such as climate security, digital harms, civic space protection, and responses to global anti-gender movements.

Civil society emphasised that leadership requires consistent, meaningful engagement rather than transactional interactions, and that government must actively integrate diverse voices, including First Nations women, diaspora communities, youth, LGBTQIA+ groups, and women from conflict affected regions, into policy design and decision making.

Accountability was also seen as needing reinforcement through clearer governance structures, better reporting across agencies, and a stronger feedback loop between Government and civil society. Collectively, the consultations point to an opportunity for Australia to reassert global WPS leadership through principled diplomacy, predictable resourcing, and more inclusive, transparent mechanisms that reflect the complexity and evolving nature of peace and security challenges.

Case Study: UN Women Gen-Forum enhances intergenerational peacebuilding

One example of Australia's recent efforts to strengthen its engagement with diverse voices in the WPS agenda is the development of the Gen-Forum.

Organised by UN Women in partnership with the Australian Government, the Gen-Forum 2024-26 brought together 53 young peace advocates from over 20 countries across Asia and the Pacific to examine regional peace and security challenges. Participants were aged 18 to 35 and included Indigenous women, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ people. The Gen-Forum presented an opportunity to address rising youth disenfranchisement by integrating young women's leadership and intergenerational collaboration. 10 participants from the 2024 cohort continued their peacebuilder development by returning as mentors to the 2025-26 cohort.

The Gen-Forum collaboratively developed six recommendations to support the realisation of the WPS agenda in the Asia Pacific, designed to be acted upon by government and civil society organisations. While the recommendations generated through this process align closely with many ongoing and emerging WPS initiatives in the region, there is currently no feedback loop between policy makers and the Gen-Forum.

Areas for further development

Australia's leadership and accountability for the WPS agenda requires a more integrated, whole-of-government approach, and consultations highlighted that several critical domestic agencies and operational arms remain absent from WPS governance structures. Key APS agencies such as the OFW, NEMA, DCCEEW, the e-Safety Commissioner, Attorney General's Department (AGD), and cyber and intelligence agencies are not consistently engaged in WPS governance or advisory, despite their central roles in addressing gendered impacts of disasters, cyber harms, climate change, mis- and dis-information, and domestic security threats. While IDC membership may be one mechanism for engaging some of these agencies, there is an opportunity to consider additional mechanisms to ensure they are able to contribute to the WPS agenda and inform WPS policy. Research and information-sharing between the Office for Women and DFAT is working well, providing a reliable and effective channel for cross-government evidence, analysis and policy insights. As the WPS function transitions to a security-focused area within DFAT, it will be important that these mechanisms remain in place and are deliberately built upon, ensuring continuity of collaboration, preservation of existing knowledge flows, and strengthened cross-government research capability.

Partners also stressed that operational and tactical parts of agencies, including those working directly in policing, crisis response, cyber operations, frontline disaster management, and international deployments, are missing from coordination mechanisms, creating a disconnect between high-level policy and ground-level realities. Strengthening leadership and accountability is therefore essential not only for domestic policy coherence, but because rising geopolitical tension in the region is amplifying gendered risks, including cyber-enabled harassment, shrinking civic space, and heightened demand on crisis response systems. Ensuring these identified agencies and operational arms of government are at the table would reinforce Australia's ability to respond credibly, cohesively, and strategically to the evolving security landscape, demonstrating genuine WPS leadership at a moment when it is increasingly needed.

Consultations with posts indicated that several Australian overseas missions outside the Indo-Pacific are actively advancing WPS implementation, particularly in post-conflict settings. However, much of this work sits outside existing reporting frameworks and is therefore not captured or recognised at the departmental level. Posts noted that strengthened feedback mechanisms into DFAT, along with improved coordination, such as through communities of practice or regular cross-post engagement, would support greater collaboration, visibility, and knowledge-sharing among staff contributing to WPS implementation. Other suggestions from Posts included making WPS a priority for all overseas missions; having committed, even if limited, resources and funding to ensure there is consistent and ongoing WPS initiatives with local actors and civil society; and leveraging existing local and international partners in country.

There are significant opportunities for Australia to deepen its engagement with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the European Union on WPS, which would reinforce Australia's international leadership and demonstrate sustained commitment at a time when the global WPS agenda is under increasing pressure. European posts noted that Australia and other like-minded partners have space to step up their leadership, including by strengthening connections between the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions through mechanisms such as NATO's Indo-Pacific Four (ROK, Japan, New Zealand and Australia), all of which are strong supporters of WPS. Potential avenues for enhanced engagement range from low-intensity to more resource-intensive options, including continued Australian representation on NATO's Civil Society Advisory Panel and attendance at other critical European forums and civil society events; incorporating WPS messaging into existing dialogues, interventions, and speaking opportunities; coordinating Indo-Pacific Four advocacy within NATO and with the EU in multilateral settings; creating new platforms to share WPS lessons between the Asia-Pacific and Europe; and seconding gender experts into EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions or NATO gender advisor roles. To be effective and sustainable, such efforts would require additional resourcing in Canberra to support Posts with whole-of-government input, or the reprioritisation of responsibilities at Post to create capacity for ongoing engagement. Posts also outlined that Australian Ministers are often invited to senior WPS related meetings outside of the Asia-Pacific region, but representation from Canberra could be increased.

Civil society outlined that Australia's foreign policy on WPS is well-respected, and consequently, Australia has strong convening power that is currently under-utilised. Stakeholders suggested Australia could leverage its convening power to bring together countries, institutions, and organisations to advance the WPS agenda globally. While Australia has supported women from conflict-affected areas to attend global events such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), Annual WPS in New York and Beijing+30 Review Meeting, stakeholders commented that Australia could step into more of a leadership role to begin convening similar meetings or events.

Case Study: Australia's Direct Aid Program for civil society engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Australia's Direct Aid Program (DAP) has progressed the WPS agenda in the Western Balkans by supporting numerous civil society groups in priority areas including women's empowerment, youth empowerment, and democracy and inclusion. In FY2024-25, Australia's DAP included funding for four established women-led NGOs dedicated to improving women's security and prosperity. This included cybersecurity workshops for women and marginalised youth, training in local handicraft techniques to promote economic independence, supporting education to reduce instances of domestic violence and empower survivors, and profiling the contribution of women to Bosnia and Herzegovina's history and culture.

Australia's DAP funding has supported women's empowerment in a post-war context. Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina are active contributors to peace and security, as well as victims of abuse, domestic violence and femicide. The DAP aims to enhance women's empowerment in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while promoting post-conflict reconciliation and coexistence by supporting many women who were internally displaced and victims of war atrocities to acquire new skills and build stronger communities.



Finding 6

Finding 6. Australia remains a trusted and principled regional WPS leader, but its influence is increasingly constrained by global headwinds

Stakeholders identified that Australia is seen as a credible and stabilising actor in the Indo-Pacific, particularly through sustained support to women mediators, civil society, and multilateral institutions. However, the growing anti-gender equality movement poses a significant risk to the sustainability and impact of global WPS efforts. In this context, expectations are intensifying for Australia not only to shoulder a greater share of visible leadership, but also to invest more substantially in core WPS and gender equality partnerships and institutions to maintain momentum and counteract these regressive pressures.

Implementation Analysis

This section of the report summarises key findings and insights relating to the implementation of the WPS, including a focus on governance, M&E, inclusivity, adaptability and resourcing.

High-level summary of key implementation challenges

- **Lack of whole-of-government integration:** Key domestic agencies such as NEMA, e-Safety, AGD, and cyber/intelligence actors are absent from the IDC and WPS governance mechanisms, limiting Australia's ability to respond to emerging threats like cyber-enabled GBV, climate driven crises, and mis- and disinformation.
- **Operational and tactical perspectives missing from coordination:** Frontline practitioners in policing, crisis response, cyber operations, disaster management and from DFAT and AFP postings are not consistently included in WPS structures, resulting in disconnects between policy design and real-world implementation.
- **Entrenched organisational cultures and limited awareness:** Agencies described low baseline understanding of WPS, frequent conflation with diversity, equity and inclusion, and challenges gaining buy in from senior leaders. Many staff see WPS as "values driven" rather than as a peace and security imperative.
- **Resource constraints:** Many departments including Home Affairs and AFP highlighted insufficient resourcing, limited WPS dedicated FTE, and high workloads that make sustained WPS integration difficult. Civil society stressed they are under-resourced.
- **Fragmented reporting and poor visibility of existing work:** Significant WPS aligned activities e.g., Home Affairs' work in Afghanistan and AFP's GBV capacity building are not captured in NAP reporting, obscuring progress and preventing coordinated action.
- **Siloing between domestic and international agendas:** The NAP's international-only focus creates policy incoherence, misses domestic gender-security issues (e.g., family violence, social cohesion), and diminishes Australia's ability to lead credibly in the region.
- **Rising anti-rights, anti-gender, and mis- and disinformation movements:** Growing backlash is closing civic space, undermining language on women's rights at the UN, and heightening personal risks for women peacebuilders and activists. These dynamics weaken WPS progress and demand stronger government responses.
- **Climate and cyber threats outpacing policy:** Climate related displacement, ecological loss, and cyber-enabled harms (including technology facilitated GBV) are escalating quickly, while current WPS structures do not adequately integrate climate security or cybersecurity, creating gaps in readiness and response.

Cross-cutting issues which have influenced implementation

A number of recurring themes and global trends have emerged as having clear and cross-cutting influence on the WPS NAP implementation.

Table 1: Emerging and cross-cutting themes and the impact on implementation

Theme	Implementation Considerations
Climate change and disaster resilience	Climate change and disaster resilience have become major factors influencing WPS implementation. ⁵⁴ Increasingly frequent and severe climate-related shocks such as cyclones, floods, and rising sea levels disproportionately affect women and exacerbate insecurity. ⁵⁵ These events often lead to displacement, heightened risks of GBV, and disruption of peacebuilding efforts making it essential to integrate WPS principles into climate adaptation and disaster response strategies to protect vulnerable populations and maintain stability. ⁵⁶ Feedback from Australian Government Implementing Partners indicate that it is critical to include disaster response and climate agencies such as NEMA and DCCEEW, because climate-related disasters are increasingly driving insecurity and displacement, which disproportionately affect women and girls. Climate agencies such as DCCEEW can provide foresight on current and emerging risks, ensuring WPS strategies are proactive, integrated, and effective in a rapidly changing environment. ⁵⁷
Digital safety and cyber threats	Digital safety and cyber threats are another emerging challenge including both misinformation and disinformation. ⁵⁸ The rise of online harassment, gendered disinformation, and cyber-enabled violence has created new risks for women in leadership and peacebuilding roles. WPS implementation now requires collaboration with e-safety regulators and technology companies to safeguard women’s voices in digital spaces and ensure their participation in governance and conflict prevention. DFAT has supported capacity building of cybersecurity and digital safety through DFAT’s Cyber and Critical Tech Cooperation Program (CCTCP). In partnership with UN Women, 147 participants engaged in digital safety skills training to mitigate online gendered risks. This program could be enhanced by utilising a whole-of-government approach that brings in experts from digital safety and intelligence agencies.
Geostrategic competition	Geostrategic competition in the Indo-Pacific has also reshaped priorities. Heightened regional tensions, hybrid threats, and strategic rivalry have increased the need for agile WPS frameworks that are embedded in broader foreign policy and defence strategies. ⁵⁹ Without this integration, WPS priorities risk being sidelined in security planning despite their critical role in promoting stability.

⁵⁴ Women, Peace and Security Coalition, *Climate and women, peace & security*, WPS Coalition, 2025.

⁵⁵ Care, *Evicted by climate change: confronting the gendered impacts of climate-induced displacement*; UN Women, *Climate security and gender*, UN Women: Asia and the Pacific website, UN Women, n.d., accessed 10 December 2025.

⁵⁶ DFAT, *Australian national action plan on women, peace and security 2021-2031*.

⁵⁷ National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), *Emergency response*, National Emergency Management Agency website, n.d., accessed 10 December 2025.

⁵⁸ UN Women, *Digital violence is intensifying, yet nearly half of the world’s women and girls lack legal protection from digital abuse*, UN Women website, 2025, accessed 10 December 2025.

⁵⁹ LV Metre, *Society as the battlefield: reframing women, peace and security in an era of hybrid threats*, WIIS website, 2025, accessed 11 December 2025.

Theme	Implementation Considerations
Intersectionality and inclusion	Intersectionality and inclusion remain fundamental considerations. Women's experiences in conflict and peace processes are shaped by intersecting factors such as ethnicity, disability, and socio-economic status. ⁶⁰ Effective WPS implementation must address these layers to ensure programs are equitable and responsive to diverse needs.
Shared goals	Feedback from civil society indicates that coalitions play a critical role in advancing WPS while strengthening local capacity. By bringing together government agencies, civil society organisations, and community leaders, coalitions create a collaborative platform that pools resources, expertise, and influence. ⁶¹ This collective approach enables more collaborative and impactful responses to complex challenges such as conflict prevention, GBV, and climate-related insecurity. Importantly, coalitions foster knowledge sharing and skills development at the local level, empowering women's organisations and community networks to lead peacebuilding initiatives. ⁶² Through joint action, these partnerships enhance sustainability, build trust, and ensure that WPS commitments translate into practical, locally driven solutions that endure beyond individual programs. ⁶³

Source: KPMG analysis (2025)

Effectiveness of governance and coordination

Consultations reflected that while governance structures exist and coordination across a variety of stakeholders is present, these mechanisms are not consistently driving a whole-of-government approach to implementation. Relevant governance structures include the IDC, internal steering groups and reporting structures from posts, Departments and civil society organisations into DFAT.

There are notable enablers that enhance governance. The Department of Defence has created a GPS Steering Group which brings together internal stakeholders within Defence that are involved in Gender, Peace and Security more broadly than just those that implement the WPS NAP. Through this steering group, the Department has been able to map officers responsible for implementing GPS across the entire enterprise. This has been effective in understanding relevant parties who may have a focus on cross-cutting themes such as climate change and ensuring stakeholder buy-in for GPS initiatives. The GPS Steering Group has been implemented for the past 1.5 years and invites DFAT counterparts to attend meetings to provide updates on their initiatives to enhance interdepartmental coordination.

Regarding the WPS IDC, an implementing partner suggested that the governance structure could be improved through enhanced mechanisms to engage external representatives. This may include greater structured opportunities for civil society and academics to provide ongoing feedback and perspectives into the IDC on implementation progress. Incorporating these perspectives in an ongoing manner would improve the existing structure that seeks external feedback every two years through progress reports.

⁶⁰ UN Women and United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, *Intersectionality resource guide and toolkit*, UN Women and UNPRRD, 2022, accessed 15 December 2025.

⁶¹ Krause et al., *Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace*.

⁶² Search for Common Ground, *Issue brief: localising women, peace and security*, SFCG, October 2024.

⁶³ Search for Common Ground, *Issue brief: localising women, peace and security*.

Various stakeholders have commented on interdepartmental coordination to achieve outcomes under the NAP. One common insight was that the OFW should be involved to enhance governance and oversight for any domestic efforts. While the OFW does not act as a delivery agency for all gender equality work directly, its core policy is to empower, enable and build capability across the APS so that every agency carries responsibility for gender equality within its own portfolio. This whole-of-government enabling role is directly relevant to Australia's WPS agenda, which similarly requires shared ownership, cross-agency capability, and strong gender analysis across domestic and international policy settings. There remains a strong and ongoing opportunity for strategic dialogue with the Office for Women to ensure that its expertise continues to inform WPS implementation, strengthen gender-responsive security and crisis policy, and support coherent alignment between domestic gender equality priorities and WPS commitments

While the WPS NAP has a limited domestic focus, Implementing Partners have outlined their domestic efforts in progress reports. Stakeholders across government and civil society have also emphasised reporting on domestic efforts can enhance Australia's reputation and credibility internationally in regard to WPS. This was further reiterated with consultations with the Philippines' DFAT post, which indicated that consultations with government stakeholders have already been undertaken to discuss lessons learned and strategies to combat GBV in respective countries.

Thus, to enhance governance mechanisms, the NAP may want to consider roles and responsibilities for the OFW and how the NAP can link to other domestic strategies such as the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032.

Posts working in regional multilateral environments indicated that there are clear reporting and oversight processes into DFAT, although their capacity to respond to external stakeholders is constrained due to resourcing demands. One post reported that their current resourcing allows for ad hoc engagement with civil society and multilateral partners, but they are unable to provide deeper technical advice that is requested by partners, such as in the capacity-building and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) space.



Finding 7

Finding 7. Whole of government coordination and implementation remains limited. There are clear opportunities to strengthen strategic and operational integration to accelerate WPS outcomes

There are significant opportunities to deepen integration across agencies, strategically and operationally, to accelerate WPS outcomes. These include strengthening joint policy development, embedding shared performance frameworks, enhancing cross agency governance, and expanding coordinated delivery mechanisms at country, regional and multilateral levels. Critical Australian Public Service agencies such as NEMA, e-Safety Commissioner, DCCEEW, and cyber/intelligence agencies are not systematically integrated into WPS coordination. This undermines policy coherence, particularly on climate security, digital harms, misinformation, and domestic gender security issues.

Adequacy of resources

Resources across the WPS investment are largely being used effectively, but several areas would benefit from strengthened management and strategic adjustments to maximise impact. Evidence from the AIMR shows that the investment is performing well overall, with strong ratings for both effectiveness and efficiency. Specifically, the program received scores of 5 out of 6 for effectiveness and 5 out of 6 for efficiency, indicating that outputs and outcomes are generally being delivered as planned and that partners are using funds responsibly and productively. This strong performance is reinforced by the tangible progress seen across the portfolio, such as the support provided to Vietnam and Timor-Leste in launching updated NAPs on WPS, with additional plans expected in Cambodia and the Solomon Islands. These successes demonstrate that funds directed toward UN Women are producing measurable gains in WPS localisation across the Asia Pacific region.

The resilience, justice, and crisis response components of the investment also highlight effective use of resources. For instance, the Gender Justice Practitioners Hub has contributed to the ICC Office of the Prosecutor committing to develop new principles on gender persecution, signalling meaningful policy influence at international level. Meanwhile, Australia's core funding to the WPHF has enabled large-scale delivery of frontline support, including 188 new grants to 293 civil society organisations and direct safety assistance to 369 women human rights defenders and over 1,000 dependents in 22 crisis-affected countries, evidence of highly efficient, rapid, and targeted deployment of funds in high-need environments.

Resource use has also been affected by external factors such as currency losses when converting Australian dollars into USD or EUR, which can reduce the purchasing power of funds and constrain partner delivery. Although gender equality performance is strong, with a score of 6 out of 6, disability inclusion remains at an "adequate" level (4 out of 6), suggesting that resources could be more intentionally directed to support inclusion of people with disabilities, including through expanded co-design with organisations of persons with disabilities and the development of tailored performance indicators.⁶⁴

Finally, while climate–peace–security (CPS) considerations are integrated as a mainstreamed theme, they have not yet been elevated to a significant or principal objective. Given the growing recognition of climate risks as a driver of conflict and insecurity, strengthening the CPS dimension would allow resources to achieve greater long-term and systemic impact. Partners have already demonstrated strong momentum in this space through CPS events at the UN's Conference of the Parties (COP), COP28 and COP29 and through new climate-security funding windows under WPHF, indicating that additional investment would likely yield strong returns.

In summary, resources are being used effectively overall: the program is delivering concrete results, leveraging partners' strengths, and providing direct support to women's rights organisations and human rights defenders in conflict-affected contexts. However, to maximise effectiveness, the investment would benefit from accelerated spending, donor diversification, stronger partner performance management, enhanced disability inclusion, and a more explicit focus on climate–security integration.

Australian based resources are limited to a single WPS advisor within the DFAT located within the development area, a single advisor within the Department of Home Affairs, two advisors within AFP and a dedicated WPS advisor within the APMC. Department of Defence maintains a Gender, Peace and Security Directorate, who support the department to meet its commitments under the NAP.

⁶⁴ A Banister, *Annual investment monitoring report*, [internal document], 2025.

Monitoring and evaluation systems

M&E under Australia’s WPS NAP and across the Indo-Pacific needs to move from broad activity tracking to specific, outcome-driven frameworks that reflect regional realities. Current systems often measure outputs like the number of trainings or deployments but fail to assess whether these actions lead to tangible changes, such as women influencing peace negotiations or reducing GBV. This gap makes it difficult to demonstrate impact and learn from experience.

Challenges exist with the current MEL, primarily related to the relevance of indicators, data sets, methodology and monitoring in a complex operating environment. Robust quantitative and qualitative data collection and analyses are critical for assessing effectiveness of the WPS NAP. The M&E framework should include clear, measurable indicators tied to regional priorities. Understandably, this becomes complex when there are multiple MPS delivery partners, each with varied action plans and activities delivered over different time periods. Add to this the complex global environment, and the ability to infer causal links to the WPS and outcomes achieved becomes difficult.

Stakeholders consistently stressed the need to address and upgrade implementing partners monitoring and reporting mechanisms to bring insights together in a systematic way, ensure accountability to the WPS objectives, and enhance transparency regarding the impact being achieved. This should also be balanced with a pragmatic approach to reporting which minimises administrative burden on implementing partners and considers resourcing requirements should additional data collection and reporting be required.

The longevity of the current plan also creates challenges for M&E, with data sources often becoming outdated or obsolete. The M&E framework would benefit from an updated set of indicators which prioritise contemporary data sources and consider impact across three key areas:

Table 2: Example indicators for consideration

Measurement type	Example Indicators
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and types of initiatives and settings • Number of people engaging with the initiatives • Number of partners involved
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of increased awareness • Evidence of improved attitudes towards WPS • Evidence of policy change regarding WPS • Evidence of behaviour change regarding WPS • Number and percentage of people that report improved behaviours or reduced risks
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and percentage of people that report the initiatives are culturally safe and appropriate • Number and percentage of people that report they were satisfied with the initiatives

Source: KPMG analysis (2025)

The WPS NAP outcome indicators are currently high-level and less closely aligned to specific priority regions or initiatives. Whilst this allows flexibility to accommodate for various initiatives, it does make it more difficult to demonstrate a causal link between initiatives and outcomes. The Framework would benefit from more direct alignment with priority regions or initiatives. For example, in the Pacific, indicators could track women’s leadership in disaster response committees or their role in climate adaptation planning. In Southeast Asia, metrics might focus on women’s participation in cybersecurity policy or peace dialogues.

These context-specific indicators would make progress more visible and actionable. Specific indicators and data sources should be agreed in collaboration with implementing partners.

Case study: Best Practice Monitoring, Evaluation Framework Examples

Australia may look to best practice examples internationally which measure impact of WPS planning. For example, the UK NAP defines intended outcomes in a way that looks beyond outputs, to measure their impact directly linked to internal department priorities and priorities associated with focus countries. In addition to regular reporting, the UK WPS also embeds evaluation throughout the full cycle of the plan, with a baseline study conducted after one year, including focus countries. This baseline data is then used as a comparator point for the mid-point impact evaluation at two-and-a-half years and the final evaluation at five years.

The Philippines' WPS NAP also has a strong M&E Framework and a separate indicator handbook that outlines the indicator and its definition, the method of computation, the data source (which lists ministries, agencies and organisations that collect the data), collection method, frequency of data collection and disaggregation (categories used to break down the data). The handbook also identifies potential indicators in addition to midterm outcomes. Potential indicators are identified where data may not exist but are recommended to be introduced as indicators over time through a phased approach for implementing agencies. The NAP also has separate indicators for the MEAL framework, one of which focuses on strengthened coordination and collaboration amongst stakeholders. The development of the indicator handbook provides a structured and uniform mechanism for measuring progress against outcomes.

Collaboration is key to strengthening M&E. Regional platforms like Pacific Women Lead and ASEAN's WPS initiatives offer opportunities to share data, harmonise reporting standards, and co-develop evaluation tools. Partnering with civil society and research institutions can also help build capacity for data collection and analysis, ensuring that evidence is not only generated but used to adapt programs. Joint learning exercises and regional scorecards could create accountability and foster innovation across countries.

By making the framework more specific and leveraging regional collaboration, WPS programming can move beyond compliance reporting to demonstrate real, transformative impact for women in peace and security.



Finding 8

Finding 8. Monitoring and Evaluation systems remain output heavy and lack the sophistication of international best practice

Australia's WPS NAP M&E approach captures activities delivered but not outcomes. It aims to report on qualitative insights and case studies to identify progress and relies heavily on activity and output data to evidence impact of programs. This approach results in limitations in the ability to attribute impact from the programs. In contrast, the UK uses baseline studies, midterm evaluations, refined indicators, and parliamentary reporting to demonstrate impact and enable adaptive management. The Philippines has a comprehensive MEAL system, and Indicator Handbook and mid-term objectives with a robust methodology for measuring progress. Australia lacks a similarly structured, cyclical, and outcome focused systems.

Partnerships with civil society and multilateral actors

Partnerships with civil society and multilateral actors were consistently described as valuable but uneven, with strong pockets of collaboration alongside notable structural gaps. Civil society organisations emphasised that Australia is generally viewed as a trusted and principled partner, particularly in the Pacific and Southeast Asia, where sustained support for mediation networks, women peacebuilders, and regional convenings has strengthened Australia's reputation for feminist, inclusive engagement. Many actors highlighted positive examples such as the PWMN, African Women's Voices for Peace, WPS Coalition collaborations, partnerships with UN Women and Australia's constructive role in multilateral forums, showing that these partnerships can produce deep influence, local legitimacy, and high-value political access.

However, consultations also revealed significant challenges, including inconsistent engagement across agencies, declining formal dialogue mechanisms, and civil society feeling that government collaboration has become more transactional, with feedback loops often weak or absent. Some groups noted that funding shifts and outsourcing have disrupted long-standing trust-based relationships, and that government does not always translate civil society insights into policy or programming. Multilateral partnerships remain strong particularly through Australia's support to UN Women, WPHF, and regional bodies, however stakeholders observed that Australia's leadership could be undermined if domestic agencies and operational parts of government are not better aligned with global commitments. Overall, while partnerships are high-impact and highly valued, they require more consistent structures, more predictable engagement, and clearer whole-of-government coordination to fully realise their potential.

Participants suggested APMC could broaden engagement by involving a wider set of stakeholders, including the OFW, NEMA, e-Safety Commissioner, AGD, and operational arms of Defence, AFP, and Home Affairs, so that conversations reflect the full spectrum of emerging WPS issues such as climate security, cyber harms, and shrinking civic space. Additionally, partners recommended the WPS IDC take a more proactive role in convening multiagency collaboration supporting scenario planning, facilitating inclusion of First Nations and diaspora voices, and ensuring civil society engagement is ongoing rather than event based. Strengthening coordination structures, restoring more predictable partnerships, and embedding civil society expertise into working level policy processes were all identified as keyways APMC could enhance its impact and reinforce Australia's WPS leadership.

Case study: Southeast Asian Network of Civil Society Organisations

Coordinated by Home Affairs in partnership with Deakin University, the Southeast Asian Network of Civil Society Organisations has supported more than 60 civil society organisations across Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand to strengthen resilience against violent extremism. Since 2016, the initiative has prioritised collaboration between grassroots actors and regional institutions, building partnerships through regional forums, joint training, and digital platforms for knowledge exchange.

Partnerships have enabled innovative responses to local challenges. In the BARMM, women-led programs supported by civil society and BARMM armed forces helped former ex-Abu Sayyaf widows reintegrate into their communities. These efforts combine psychosocial support with community engagement, reducing stigma and fostering reconciliation.

By linking local leadership with multilateral frameworks, the network is reframing women's roles as drivers of peace and recovery. The network continues to strengthen cooperation across sectors to prevent extremism and promote inclusive, stable societies throughout Southeast Asia.



Finding 9

Finding 9. Civil society partnerships are high impact but increasingly uneven and transactional

Australia's longstanding relationships with civil society remain a major asset, supporting legitimacy, localisation, and context specific problem solving. Globally, Australia is viewed as a leader on genuine engagement and partnership with civil society. However, domestically, engagement has become inconsistent across agencies, with less transparent feedback loops and reduced predictability. Civil society emphasised a growing disconnect between consultation and policy decision making.

Bridging the international and domestic divide

Consistent feedback from Civil Society indicated that Australia can bridge the international and domestic divide in the WPS agenda by fostering genuine partnerships that prioritise listening, learning, and co-creation with regional neighbours. This means supporting Pacific and Southeast Asian priorities, supporting local leadership, and ensuring WPS initiatives reflect cultural context. By embedding lessons learnt from Australia in our engagement and creating space for mutual exchange of knowledge, Australia can strengthen trust, advance regional security outcomes, and demonstrate that WPS is a shared responsibility across the region. Specific actions for the future could include:

- **Link Domestic and Global Narratives:** Showcase First Nations leadership in regional WPS dialogues, positioning Australia as a partner that values diversity and shared learning.
- **Establish a joint tasking framework** between DFAT, Australian Transactions Reports and Analysis Centre, AFP and security agencies, state/territory police, and First Nations women's organisations to target financial flows linked to GBV and exploitation.
- **Regional mis- and disinformation strategy:** Develop a Regional Mis- and Disinformation Strategy to strengthen early detection, coordinated response, and community-level resilience to harmful narratives particularly those targeting women leaders and peacebuilders by integrating cyber, diplomatic, and public information capabilities across Australia, Pacific partners, and Southeast Asia.

Meaningful First Nations engagement with WPS

Involvement of First Nations peoples in the WPS agenda strengthens Australia's capacity to build lasting peace, community stability and inclusive economic participation. As Australia reinforces its WPS leadership, advancing the WPS agenda at both the domestic and regional levels, it is essential to partner with First Nations communities through genuine, ongoing participation at all levels of consultation, design, decision-making and implementation. Various stakeholders commented that DFAT can leverage its First Nations Ambassador and its Office for First Nations International Engagement to enhance meaningful participation of First Nations people in peace processes internationally.

Embedding First Nations leadership and cultural knowledge in WPS supports community driven approaches to address the underlying causes of violence and inequality, resulting in more effective prevention and protection outcomes.⁶⁵ Meaningful participation also fosters the development of institutional trust, ensuring that peace and security reflect community priorities such as safe housing, financial security, protection from violence and the ability to exercise cultural authority on Country.⁶⁶ Incorporating frameworks like the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into Australia's WPS approach can affirm self-determination and strengthen responses to emerging security challenges, including climate impacts on land, water and cultural heritage.⁶⁷

The Australian Government has facilitated some engagement between First Nations women and women from conflict-affected areas in the Pacific and Middle East through the APMC, however, stakeholders have called for greater engagement to be facilitated by First Nations women. Additionally, while stakeholders and the Government acknowledge Australia has challenges domestically with ensuring First Nations women's safety, there are key lessons learned that can be shared across the region.

More broadly, civil society stakeholders called for Australia's conceptualisation of WPS to embrace locally understood concepts of peace and security, integrating learnings from traditional and customary models of peacebuilding across First Nations, Pacific and Southeast Asian communities to reflect the lived realities of those communities and best deliver an effective regional WPS agenda.



Finding 10

Finding 10. Domestic–international divide reduces policy coherence and weakens Australia's credibility

Compared with the UK, Canada, Philippines and Japan, Australia's NAP embeds limited domestic commitments, despite significant relevant work occurring across Home Affairs, AFP and state level institutions. The absence of domestic reporting or integration into the NAP reduces visibility of achievements and creates misalignment between international leadership and internal practice.

⁶⁵ WPS Coalition, *Women, peace and security: aligning the WPS agenda with the priorities of first nation women in Australia report*, WPS Coalition, 2023.

⁶⁶ WPS Coalition, *Women, peace and security: aligning the WPS agenda with the priorities of first nation women in Australia report*.

⁶⁷ S Petikam and M Vaidya, *Women's voices in Indigenous knowledge systems: guardians of cultural heritage*, Gap Bodhi Taru, 2024.

Sustainability of the strategy

Australia's ten-year NAP is challenging without adaptive or reactive mechanisms for WPS in today's rapidly shifting geostrategic landscape. The Indo-Pacific faces accelerating challenges of climate-induced displacement, cyber threats, gendered disinformation, and rising geopolitical tensions that can destabilise communities and undermine women's participation in peacebuilding. A static, decade-long plan risks becoming obsolete as new risks emerge, leaving gaps in protection and engagement. Without built-in review cycles, horizon scanning, and rapid response protocols, WPS frameworks cannot keep pace with hybrid threats or regional crises. To remain effective, Australia's WPS approach must incorporate shorter feedback loops, scenario-based planning, and agile mechanisms that allow for real-time adjustments aligned with evolving security dynamics.

Emerging Issues and Lessons Learned

Emerging risks or opportunities

Recent literature highlights several emerging risks for the WPS agenda. One significant concern is the rise of technology-facilitated GBV, including online harassment, deepfakes, and cyberstalking. While digital platforms create opportunities for participation, they also expose women to new vulnerabilities that WPS frameworks have yet to fully address. Additionally, transnational threats such as organised crime, artificial intelligence misuse, and climate-driven displacement are increasingly shaping security landscapes however remain underrepresented in current WPS strategies. Climate-related security risks further compound these challenges, as environmental stressors disproportionately affect women, increasing their exposure to violence, displacement, and economic marginalisation in fragile contexts.

Alongside these risks, new opportunities are emerging that could strengthen WPS implementation. Digital technologies, for instance, can enhance women's access to information, networks, and leadership roles, enabling more meaningful participation in peacebuilding processes. Women-led climate and peacebuilding initiatives are also gaining traction, offering innovative solutions for resource management, social cohesion, and resilience. Scaling these efforts through integrated WPS and climate-security approaches presents a transformative opportunity. Furthermore, policy innovation, such as incorporating cybersecurity, AI governance, and climate adaptation into WPS frameworks can modernise implementation and improve coherence across sectors.

These developments signal a critical turning point for WPS. Addressing digital threats, climate insecurity, and transnational risks while leveraging technology and women-led innovation can redefine the agenda's relevance and impact. To seize these opportunities, WPS NAPs must broaden their scope, strengthen institutional capacity, and embed intersectional approaches that ensure gender-sensitive responses across emerging domains.

Trade and Women, Peace and Security

For Australia, embedding WPS principles into trade policy would not only support gender equality but also unlock significant economic potential across the region. WPS also reduces trade risk through conflict prevention. Evidence shows that countries with greater gender equality are significantly less likely to experience conflict, and inclusion of women in peace processes improves peace agreement durability by 35 per cent over 15 years.⁶⁸ Stability reduces trade volatility and creates predictable environments essential for investment and cross-border commerce key factors for Australia's trade security in the Pacific and Southeast Asia.

Unlocking participation in global value chains is another opportunity. Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation's "Women's Economic Empowerment through Trade Policy" initiative highlights that gender-responsive trade agreements, supported by data and analysis, expand women entrepreneurs' integration into value chains. Diversifying who benefits from trade strengthens regional linkages and economic resilience, creating new opportunities for Australian businesses to partner with women-led enterprises.

⁶⁸ Coomaraswamy, *Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing the peace: a global study on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*; Stone, 'Quantitative analysis of women's participation in peace processes'.

Finally, WPS enhances digital trade and e-commerce. The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific notes that women face systemic barriers in sectors like digital and green economies; addressing these challenges increases participation in emerging trade areas. Enhanced digital inclusion supports cross-border e-commerce and digital trade growth in the region, opening new markets and fostering innovation.

Investing in WPS in the Pacific supports sustainable economic growth and increased trade.⁶⁹ By reducing SGBV, investments in WPS aim to contribute to social stability, which is essential for increasing the participation of women in the economy and enabling cross-border trade. This fosters an environment where trade agreements can be implemented effectively, supply chains remain secure, and private sector partnerships thrive. Empowering women in leadership, governance and peacebuilding, strengthens regional stability and institutional trust, opening pathways for increased trade, investment, and shared prosperity across the Pacific. By working with the PIF, Australia can amplify its investments in WPS, promoting gender-responsive policy environments that are more supportive of trade and investment across the region.

While the linkages between WPS and regional trade are evident, a more detailed examination of the specific trade-related mechanisms, opportunities, and constraints falls beyond the scope of this review. A targeted piece of work would help clarify how Australia's WPS investments can more deliberately shape gender-responsive trade policy, strengthen women's participation in cross-border markets, and enhance the stability and prosperity of regional economic systems.

Australian private and education sector and regional engagement

Australia's WPS agenda can be strengthened through deeper engagement with the private sector and targeted regional initiatives. Opportunities exist to leverage existing partnerships such as the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement within Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands to advance women's empowerment and to combat sexual exploitation and slavery. Women's empowerment could be driven through the private and education sector to upskill in English language skills, artificial intelligence and technology, and in job markets where Australia has key gaps such as for nursing. Universities, higher education and vocational education institutions could be leveraged to implement targeted exchange programs for refugees or those impacted by conflict.

Modern slavery remains a critical area for deeper engagement with the private sector. Current approaches often emphasise compliance, such as withdrawing from suppliers that fail to meet standards, rather than driving systemic change. A more effective strategy would incentivise companies to transform exploitative business models and embed women's empowerment at the core of operations. Australian businesses can play a leadership role by linking trade and investment to gender outcomes, for example through tax concessions or preferential agreements for companies that implement upskilling programs for women, improve labour conditions, and strengthen protections against exploitation. Moving beyond compliance to proactive capacity-building creates shared value: reducing modern slavery risks while advancing economic resilience and gender equality across the Indo-Pacific.

⁶⁹ DFAT, *Pacific regional – empowering women and girls*, DFAT website, 2024, accessed 18 December 2025.

Innovative approaches

One innovative approach that has worked well is integrating WPS principles into cybersecurity initiatives. Programs such as UN Women’s “Women, Peace and Cybersecurity” in the Asia-Pacific have successfully supported women’s participation in cybersecurity policymaking and the prevention of technology-facilitated threats. These efforts combine capacity building with policy reform, ensuring that gender perspectives are embedded in digital security strategies. Multi-stakeholder workshops, like those convened between the United States and Southeast Asia, have also proven effective in fostering collaboration among governments, civil society, and academia to develop inclusive cybersecurity frameworks.

In the climate–peace nexus, locally led initiatives have demonstrated strong impact. For example, the Berghof Foundation’s Insider Peacebuilders Network in Somalia has trained over 100 women mediators to address environmental stressors such as land disputes and resource degradation. By linking gender-inclusive mediation with climate adaptation strategies, these programs strengthen social cohesion and reduce conflict drivers. Similarly, guidance from Georgetown University emphasises embedding climate resilience into WPS NAPs through cross-government planning and civil society consultations, ensuring coherence and sustainability.⁷⁰ The Australian WPS Coalition emphasises the importance of investing in research to establish a robust evidence base on the gender–security–climate nexus, viewing this as a strategic opportunity to advance national expertise and leadership.⁷¹

Forward-looking approaches that incorporate technology and AI governance into WPS programming are emerging as critical innovations. Policy briefs like “WPS in the Digital Age” highlight the need to address gendered dimensions of AI such as bias, surveillance, and privacy while exploring opportunities for AI to support conflict prevention and recovery.⁷² Integrating gender analysis into tech governance ensures that future security solutions are equitable and inclusive.

Innovative funding models are transforming locally led peacebuilding by providing rapid, adaptable and risk-tolerant support for women’s participation in peace processes. The UN WPHF’s Rapid Response Window (RRW) exemplifies this flexibility by accepting proposals in multiple languages and formats, including audio and video, and by allowing funds to be reprogrammed for emerging needs such as relocation, security, or revised project scopes during crises.⁷³ This agility proved critical in Sudan when formal negotiations collapsed after an outbreak of armed conflict in 2023. The RRW support enabled civil society women’s organisations to convene consultations in Nairobi, Kampala, and Cairo, producing a shadow peace agreement and action plan that articulated civil society priorities for ending violence.⁷⁴ Facilitated through the RRW’s design for agile and context-sensitive support, these initiatives advanced a WPS agenda beyond gender-responsive provisions, addressing emerging priorities such as ceasefire arrangements, transitional justice and accountability for human rights violations.

⁷⁰ UN, *United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples*, UN, 2007; C Vetter and J Smith, *Practical guidance for integrating climate into WPS national action plans*, Georgetown Institute of WPS, 4 March 2025.

⁷¹ WPS Coalition, *Climate and women, peace & security*.

⁷² H Ferron, *WPS in the digital age: investigating AI and international cybersecurity policy*, Research Network on Women, Peace and Security, 12 February 2025.

⁷³ M Cardenas, A Porter, C Safyan, P Poppelreuter, A Bramble, A Schoebridge, T Paffenholz, A Sommo and S d’Estaing, *Furthering women’s full and meaningful participation amidst a shifting peacemaking landscape: impacts and trends from the WPHF rapid response window*, Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund, 2024.

⁷⁴ Cardenas et al., *Furthering women’s full and meaningful participation amidst a shifting peacemaking landscape: Impacts and trends from the WPHF rapid response window*.

Australia could benefit from adopting a similarly flexible funding mechanism in the Indo-Pacific region to strengthen women's leadership in peacebuilding, provide sustained and systemic support to community-based organisations and ensure rapid, context-sensitive responses to emerging security challenges.⁷⁵ Civil society stakeholders specifically called for Australia to better fund and resource grassroots and community actors to drive locally grounded change.

Case study: Cyber Safety Pasifika

The Cyber Safety Pasifika (CSP) is led by the AFP with the aim to address the intersection of cybercrime and the WPS agenda. Delivered in partnership with the Women's Services Network, the Australian peak body for specialist women's domestic and family violence services and endorsed by the Fijian and Tongan Women's and Children's Crisis Centres, CSP developed training on combatting technology-enabled domestic violence. Since 2023, more than 150 frontline women's service workers and police officers across 16 Pacific Island nations have been equipped to better protect women and children from online abuse.

CSP's approach is distinctly 'by the Pacific, for the Pacific.' The invitation for former participants to co-present and then lead subsequent courses is heavily attributed to the success of the program, fostering local ownership and gender-inclusive leadership. Female police officers have taken prominent roles in cyber awareness programs and community roadshows, extending outreach to vulnerable groups and amplifying women's voices in policing. Initiatives such as Tonga's cybercrime unit and Fiji's community roadshows demonstrate how CSP combines technical capability-building with cultural relevance.

Informing future programming

Future WPS programming should begin by integrating emerging threats into its design. Traditional approaches focused on conflict and post-conflict settings are no longer sufficient. Digital risks such as cyber harassment, deepfakes, and technology-facilitated violence, along with challenges posed by artificial intelligence and climate-driven insecurity, need to be explicitly addressed in NAPs and peacebuilding strategies. These issues are now central to women's safety and participation in security processes.

Programs must also prioritise intersectionality and local contexts. Women's experiences of insecurity vary widely based on factors such as ethnicity, age, disability, and displacement. Tailoring interventions to these realities and amplifying grassroots voices will make WPS efforts more inclusive and effective. This requires moving beyond one-size-fits-all approaches and embedding nuanced, context-specific solutions.

Technology should be harnessed not only to mitigate risks but also to empower women. Digital platforms can provide opportunities for leadership, advocacy, and economic participation. Investments in digital literacy, cybersecurity training, and safe online spaces will enable women to engage meaningfully in governance and peacebuilding processes.

Another critical lesson is the need to link climate action with peacebuilding. Climate adaptation and resource management initiatives should be integrated into WPS programming, as women-led climate solutions can strengthen resilience and social cohesion while reducing conflict drivers in fragile environments. This intersection offers a powerful entry point for sustainable peace.

⁷⁵ WPS Coalition, *WPS regional convening summary report: twenty-five years on: reigniting the WPS agenda in response to growing conflict and climate crisis*, WPS Coalition, 2025.

Institutional capacity and policy coherence must also be strengthened. Establishing WPS Centers of Excellence and fostering collaboration across sectors, such as security, technology, and climate will improve implementation and strategic impact. Aligning WPS with broader policy agendas, including AI governance and DRR, can ensure relevance in a rapidly evolving security landscape.

Finally, robust MEL systems are essential. MEL frameworks that capture emerging risks and innovations will allow programs to remain flexible and evidence driven. This continuous learning approach will help WPS programming evolve alongside global challenges and opportunities.

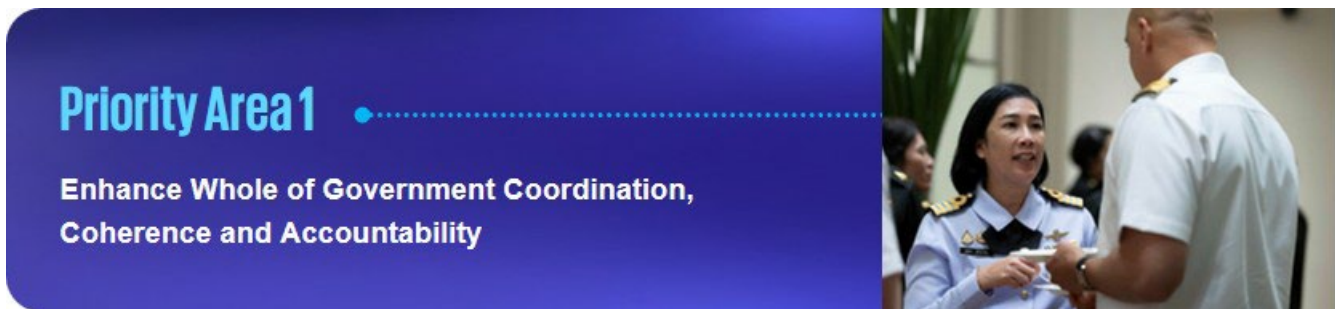
Recommendations

The recommendations that follow outline the strategic and operational actions required to accelerate progress and position the program to achieve its objectives over the remaining five years. They build directly on the findings of this midterm review, identifying the key shifts needed to strengthen implementation, enhance partnerships, and respond to emerging regional dynamics. Together, these recommendations aim to reinforce Australia’s leadership on WPS and ensure the program delivers sustained, measurable impact through to the end of the strategy period.

As the key department providing secretariat and coordination of the WPS NAP, DFAT should take a lead role in coordinating any actions which result from these recommendations. This should be done in close collaboration and partnership with the IDC, WPS implementing partners and other areas of government, where a whole-of-government approach is required.

High-level implementation considerations are noted against each recommendation to support implementation planning. It is important to note that these implementation considerations have been informed by insights captured as part of the mid-term review and as such, more information may be required in order to provide a fulsome assessment of implementation considerations.

The following recommendations have been grouped into five priority areas.



Priority Area 1 ●.....

Enhance Whole of Government Coordination, Coherence and Accountability

Recommendation 1

Consider expansion of the IDC membership to additional APS agencies including DCCEEW and dedicated operational personnel from current implementing partners, ensuring real time response capability, and WPS aligned practices are fully embedded into whole-of-government crisis coordination and decision making. Mechanisms should be implemented to enable greater knowledge sharing and integrated planning across operational personnel (including at posts) and policy teams. This will ensure that WPS is operationalised transparently and in line with WPS policy.

Concurrently, strengthen interdepartmental mechanisms to meaningfully engage civil society representatives and leverage their expertise, including survivor lived experience.

WPS NAP Outcomes

Outcome 4, MTO 4.3

Implementation considerations

This recommendation can be implemented using existing resources, with minimal additional effort from DFAT to coordinate new members or additional engagement mechanisms. In the first instance, this may involve adding targeted agencies (e.g., DCCEW) and establishing a CSO advisory. Consideration is required regarding the security classification of any new IDC members, with a view to minimise barriers to open and transparent information sharing.

Recommendation 2

Align WPS accountability within DFAT and relevant agencies to a security function to integrate climate, cyber, and regional stability risks, strengthen operational coordination with national security agencies, and position Australia as a regional leader in WPS-informed security engagement and crisis response. This will enable mission-aligned, whole-of-APS engagement on security and crisis outcomes.

WPS NAP Outcomes

Outcome 4, MTO 4.1

Implementation considerations

This recommendation relates to strategically positioning organisational infrastructure, to ensure that women's leadership in peace and security is maximised. This structural shift can support women's leadership and participation as integral to security and conflict prevention. However, it is important that this is not mis-understood as a move towards a more militarised approach to WPS.

This recommendation is able to be implemented using existing resources, with internal mechanisms needing to be activated to enable required structural shifts. There would also be benefit in the IDC agreeing on a definition of security in the WPS context, to support mutual understanding.

Recommendation 3

Integrate Women, Peace and Security considerations into existing scenario-based disaster, cyber, and disinformation exercises to strengthen coordination, test safeguards, improve whole-of-government readiness, and ensure broad participation. This will enable WPS to be embedded as a core component of readiness and response planning.

WPS NAP Outcomes

Outcome 3, MTO 3.2

Outcome 4, MTO 4.3

Implementation considerations

Noting there are many scenarios based exercises across government, the IDC should look to prioritise ones which speak to key WPS priorities in the first instance. Existing resources may be leveraged to coordinate this recommendation, while some additional resourcing may also be required to support implementing partners participation. Implementation would also be subject to broader operational demand and resourcing across government.

Recommendation 4

Update the M&E framework, including development of indicators and measures which better align with contemporary data sets and revised priorities following the mid-term review recommendations.

A revised Framework should prioritise actionable measures for outcomes, which are fit-for-purpose for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning. This includes opportunities to understand lessons learned and enhanced transparency. This may include:

- Determining fit-for-purpose indicators, data sets and methodologies which enable outcomes and impact to be clearly understood.
- Noting the complex and discrete roles that each implementing partner plays, there may be benefit in considering nested logics which enable variance in indicators and data sets which best match the contribution of each partner.
- Updating implementing partner reporting to ensure adequate outcomes (not just output) information is being captured and reported on in a way that supports impact measurement.
- Incorporating stronger 'learning' components by coordinating opportunities to share lessons learned, collective knowledge sharing and enhancing transparency.

Implementing partners, including DFAT post representatives, should be engaged as part of these updates to ensure they are able to inform MEL design and implement any required uplifts to data collection and reporting.

WPS NAP Outcomes

Outcome 4, MTO 4.2

Implementation considerations

Updates to the M&E Framework may be able to be incorporated into existing DFAT work. Minimal additional funding may be required to engage expert MEL advice. Initial focus should be on establishing minimum viable indicators and data collection mechanisms. Additional funding may need consideration where implementing partners are required to uplift data collection and reporting processes and systems. This should be determined in consultation with Implementing partners, including DFAT posts.

Should consider balancing the need for measurable data (quantitative and qualitative) with the intent to minimise unnecessary reporting burden for implementing partners. Improved coordination of MEL activities.

Recommendation 5

Increase Women, Peace and Security operational capacity by deploying specialised advisers in conflict-affected areas, upskilling current practitioners, and building a sustainable pipeline of future WPS advisers to support regional security programs.

Enhanced coordination of WPS advisers and practitioners, linked to WPS policy, will also strengthen their impact. This includes enhancing opportunities for practitioners in conflict-affected areas to connect and share knowledge, insights and lessons learned to inform integrated practice and future policy decisions.

WPS NAP Outcomes

Outcome 4, MTO 4.1

Implementation considerations

This recommendation will require additional resourcing to determine training needs, identify appropriate upskilling opportunities, build a pipeline of practitioners and deploy them into conflict-affected areas. This may also include opportunities for implementing partners to co-fund positions.

Recommendation 6

Strengthen Australia's response to conflict-related sexual violence by improving whole-of-government coordination, survivor-centred practice, and alignment across international and domestic policy, operations, accountability mechanisms, and regional and multilateral partnerships under the NAP.

This should include:

- Deepening integration of CRSV prevention and response across conflict prevention, stabilisation, peacebuilding, and humanitarian action, ensuring diplomatic, defence, development, and security tools are aligned and mutually reinforcing under the NAP.
- Enhancing interoperability and coordinated action across DFAT, DCCEEW, Defence, AFP, Home Affairs, the Attorney General's Department (AGD), and humanitarian partners, including improved information-sharing, joint risk analysis, and consistent operational guidance for addressing CRSV in crisis and conflict-affected contexts.
- Increasing targeted support for regional and multilateral mechanisms working on CRSV, including survivor services, documentation, justice processes, and accountability pathways that complement NAP objectives.
- Strengthening alignment with Australia's domestic SGBV reform agenda, ensuring coherence between the NAP's international commitments and national efforts to prevent and respond to SGBV.
- Strengthening mechanisms for Australia to prosecute international human rights violations such as CRSV, using a survivor-centred and reparations-oriented approach, ensuring there is collaboration between key agencies to drive these prosecutions.

This approach reinforces the NAP's existing priority on CRSV, elevates survivor-centred practice, and enhances Australia's ability to deliver a coordinated, credible, and effective whole-of-government response.

WPS NAP Outcomes

Outcome 1, MTO 1.1 and 1.2

Outcome 2, MTO 2.2 and 2.3

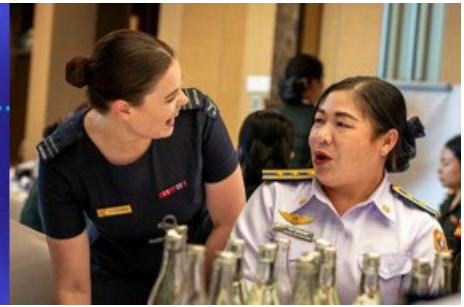
Outcome 4, MTO 4.3

Implementation considerations

Some CRSV initiatives may be able to be implemented using existing resources, particularly policy developments. Other activities may require substantial resourcing across Government to achieve a truly whole-of-government approach. It should be noted that while CRSV is prioritised in this recommendation, this is not in place of existing efforts to address broader SGBV violence. Rather, these priorities should be considered in addition to existing SGBV resourcing to address the growing need for conflict related interventions.

Priority Area 2

Establish Gender-responsive Early Warning, Data and Monitoring Systems



Recommendation 7

Conduct a feasibility study to assess the value of a unified, gender-sensitive risk dashboard that integrates climate, disaster, cyber, and online safety data. In an environment where vulnerabilities are emerging at alarming rates and exploitation is rapid, the dashboard is a critical mechanism to centralise data from various agencies in one unified dashboard, for better visibility and remediation. In doing this, the unified risk dashboard will enable rapid, coordinated decision-making and strengthen Australia's operational leadership in regional crisis responses.

Some areas to be considered for inclusion in the risk dashboard are:

- Key indicators and measures
- Risk exposure levels
- Incident response times
- Compliance adherence rates
- Risk mitigation effectiveness
- Impacts of risks (economic, social, environmental and security)

The feasibility study should consider where dashboards may currently exist and whether these can be leveraged, to achieve the same outcome.

WPS NAP Outcomes

Outcome 3, MTO 3.2

Outcome 4, MTO 4.2 and 4.3

Implementation considerations

The feasibility would need to be funded through new resourcing. In addition, any subsequent implementation of a risk dashboard would require consideration of resourcing needs for development as well as ongoing costs incurred by implementing partners to collect and input data into the dashboard and responding to identified risks.

Recommendation 8

Embed Women, Peace and Security considerations across government early-warning systems by strengthening coordination, integrating gender-sensitive risk indicators, and enabling rapid, shared alerts to prevent and respond to emerging instability. While many early warning systems exist across Government, few incorporate a WPS lens.

This may include the following steps:

- Assess what systems exist across government agencies and identify opportunities for enhancing WPS focus and coordination. These systems should be enhanced to incorporate gender specific metrics within risk modelling to detect early signs of instability affecting women, including signals such as online hate and dis-information, political exclusion, SGBV and economic stress.
- Where existing gaps are identified, consider the feasibility of creating a consolidated regional gender informed early warning system that integrates conflict, climate, cyber, economic, and social narrative indicators. As with the enhanced systems, this system should incorporate gender specific metrics within conflict risk modelling to detect early signs of instability affecting women. The system should draw on both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a holistic, gender responsive understanding of emerging risks across the region.
- In addition to considering a new gender informed early warning system, consider establishing a Rapid Alert Protocol that enables timely information sharing, preventive diplomacy, and coordinated interventions before escalation. This capability should support regional partners to respond more quickly to threats that disproportionately impact women and undermine stability.

WPS NAP Outcomes

Outcome 2, MTO 2.2

Outcome 3, MTO 3.2

Outcome 4, MTO 4.3

Implementation considerations

Some WPS work is already occurring in this space, as noted in the report findings, while more work is required to ensure WPS is embedded more consistently across government early warning systems. As such, some initiatives may be implemented using existing resources. There is likely a requirement for additional resourcing to support the required enhancement. Should a regional gender informed early warning system be developed, significant resourcing will likely be required to facilitate regional cooperation and integration.

Priority Area 3

Regional and International Partnerships to Scale WPS Impacts



Recommendation 9

Co-fund Women, Peace and Security initiatives with regional and multilateral partners to scale impact across the Pacific and Southeast Asia through shared expertise, joint training, regional data standards, and coordinated long-term collaboration. Potential partners may include other like-minded countries, Pacific Island nations and groups such as the ASEAN and UN Women. These relationships should be leveraged to draw on existing regional initiatives and scale impact across the Pacific and Southeast Asia.

Specific actions to support collaboration, may include:

- Hosting a WPS Forum to exchange best practices, align priorities, and develop joint action plans to drive collaboration in over the subsequent next five years with a specific focus on the region. In recognition of work already happening in this space at smaller scales, consider opportunities to fund or co-fund civil society to lead this at the enhanced scale.
- Develop and roll out shared training packages on gender-responsive peacebuilding and disaster response for regional security and emergency agencies.
- Develop Regional Standards for WPS Data Collection to help ASEAN and Pacific Island partners strengthen evidence-based policymaking.

WPS NAP Outcomes

Outcome 1, MTO 1.2

Outcome 2, MTO 2.1

Implementation considerations

Noting that some work is already happening in this space, existing resourced could be utilised to strengthen efforts.

Recommendation 10

Establish structured two-way knowledge-sharing mechanisms that connect Australia's domestic gender-responsive, resilience, and inclusive security approaches with its international WPS work, to strengthen policy coherence and First Nations leadership, and enhance Australia's credibility and impact in regional engagement.

These knowledge sharing mechanisms should facilitate lessons learned and highlight how domestic approaches to gender responsive policymaking, community resilience and inclusive security can inform and enhance Australia's international WPS contributions. This should also work conversely, where lessons from Australia's WPS activity may inform domestic approaches.

Considerations may include:

- Share lessons learned from national security, emergency management, gender equality initiatives, and violence prevention frameworks, to strengthen credibility and authenticity in regional WPS engagement.
- Systematically identify and articulate the links between existing domestic policies and WPS objectives to demonstrate coherence, reinforce Australia's leadership, and provide practical models that regional partners can adapt.
- Building off Recommendation 6 to strengthen WPS alignment with Australia's domestic SGBV reform agenda, support greater knowledge and insights sharing across the domestics and international agencies responding to SGBV.
- Strengthen meaningful First Nations participation and leadership across domestic and international WPS initiatives. This includes recognising and integrating First Nations knowledge in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and utilising DFAT's First Nations Ambassador and Office for First Nations International Engagement to elevate First Nations perspectives and embed lessons learned.

As part of the WPS NAP evaluation, consider the benefits and risks of integrating domestic actions, priorities and outcomes into a future iteration of the WPS NAP.

WPS NAP Outcomes

Outcome 4, MTO 4.1

Implementation considerations

Noting that some work is already happening in this space, these enhancement activities can be implemented within existing resourcing. Some additional resourcing may be required to bring together domestic policy leaders. Implementation would benefit from mapping the existing work in the WPS knowledge sharing space and considering how to integrate a domestic lens, prior to resourcing additional efforts.

Priority Area 4

Addressing Emerging and Non-Traditional Security Risks through WPS



Recommendation 11

Strengthen women's leadership in climate adaptation by supporting their roles in planning, early warning systems, and community resilience through community-led initiatives, gender-responsive disaster risk reduction policies, and regional climate security engagement.

Specific initiatives could include:

- Fund community-led climate resilience initiatives ensuring women and youth shape preparedness and recovery.
- Embed gender equality into national disaster risk reduction (DRR) Policies through technical assistance and policy partnerships in the region.
- Engage with Regional Climate Security Dialogues connecting WPS, resilience, and environmental security.

WPS NAP Outcomes

Outcome 2, MTO 2.2

Outcome 3, MTO 3.2

Implementation considerations

The majority of efforts can be implemented using existing resources, while some additional funding and resources may be required for new initiatives or implementation partners. To implement this recommendation may require greater coordination with and involvement of other agencies. Embedding WPS into DRR could be higher effort due to the work required to influence policies of other countries.

Recommendation 12

Embed digital safety and counter-disinformation as core WPS priorities within Australia's conflict prevention and regional security agenda to protect women online, counter harmful narratives, strengthen early warning, and amplify women's participation in peace and security processes.

Actions may include:

- Deliver digital safety training to protect women from cyber harassment, disinformation, and online abuse and technology-facilitated GBV;
- Support regional counter-disinformation strategies that safeguard elections, peace processes, and crisis responses;
- Commission targeted research on the gendered impacts of mis- and disinformation and toxic masculinity on women, including the rising rates of young victims and perpetrators as well as impacts on women's political participation and mediation roles;
- Consider the feasibility of developing a Regional Data and Monitoring Hub to track harmful narratives, toxic masculinity, online sentiment shifts, and other emerging dis-information risks in real

time. This may include consideration of how existing monitoring could be leveraged as well as opportunities to use AI enable tools to support operationalisation, and

- Launch data-driven positive campaigns that highlight how gender equality contributes to economic growth, stability, and community resilience.
- Work towards integrating WPS considerations into standard operating procedures for countering online abuse.

Together, these measures will help counter harmful narratives, create safer and more secure digital environments, and amplify women's voices in peace and security processes thereby strengthening Australia's ability to contribute to early warning, conflict mitigation, and regional stability.

WPS NAP Outcomes

Outcome 2, MTO 2.1 and 2.2

Implementation considerations

Some existing funding may be leveraged however these efforts are likely to require additional resourcing to enable meaningful impact. Implementation should foster engagement of practitioners and subject matter experts on specific aspects of digital safety, to ensure a focus on actionable improvements.

Priority Area 5

Resourcing WPS for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding



Recommendation 13

Expand support for women's peace leadership in peace and transitional justice processes by increasing funding for Women Mediators' Networks and strengthening community-led peacebuilding and justice initiatives. These initiatives should prioritise involvement of women (including youth), enabling training, mentoring, trauma-informed dialogue, violence prevention, reparations for survivors and resilience-building.

While current investment prioritises the Pacific and Southeast Asia region, the NAP should also consider opportunities to invest in these initiatives and participate in leadership forums more globally.

WPS NAP Outcomes

Outcome 1, MTO 1.1 and 1.2

Outcome 2, MTO 2.2 and 2.3

Implementation considerations

This recommendation will likely require additional resourcing to expand efforts and funding.

Recommendation 14

Use an existing rapid funding mechanism to provide fast, flexible support to women's organisations involved in peace negotiations and crisis response across the Pacific and Southeast Asia. Where a mechanism doesn't currently exist, consider establishing a WPS Rapid Response Fund to enable this flexible support.

This recommendation should ensure fast, ongoing locally accessible assistance. Suitable organisations may include government and grassroots or community-based organisations. This mechanism would facilitate fast and flexible responses to emerging conflict prevention and peacebuilding opportunities.

WPS NAP Outcomes

Outcome 1, MTO 1.1 and 1.2

Implementation considerations

This recommendation may leverage existing funding, although it will likely also require additional resourcing and a whole-of-government coordinated approach. Consideration should be given to establishing a panel of providers who can access the rapid response fund, enabling rapid mobilisation.

Strategic shift required

Consultations with DFAT highlighted the need for several strategic shifts to ensure the WPS agenda remains fit for purpose in a rapidly changing security environment. A key shift is moving WPS out of its current development only framing and anchoring it more explicitly within conflict prevention, international security, and geopolitical strategy, recognising that the agenda is currently “siloesd” and not leveraged across DFAT’s broader security architecture.

Specific feedback included that Australia must adopt a greater risk appetite, engaging earlier and more confidently in conversations about women’s roles in peace negotiations including in potential flashpoints rather than treating WPS as an internal culture or organisational human resource issue. A further strategic shift involves building greater coherence between WPS and domestic policy frameworks, including gender equality, First Nations diplomacy, and conflict prevention efforts, to reflect the interconnected nature of threats such as radicalisation, violent extremism, and anti-gender movements. DFAT also commented on the need to develop a more joined up, whole-of-government approach to conflict prevention, climate, cyber, security issues that are increasingly core to WPS but not currently integrated in a systematic way.

It is important to consider this strategic shift when deciding how to prioritise the recommendations. Table 4 provides an indicative prioritisation of the recommendations, accounting for implementation considerations and potential to support this strategic shift. Recommendations which provide a strong foundation for the NAP are generally prioritised for early implementation. An indicative timeframe is also provided, using the below scale:

- Short term – up to one year
- Medium term - one to three years
- Long term – three to five years

Table 3. Indicative priority of recommendations

Priority	Recommendation	Initial Implementation Steps	Timeframe
Priority 1	R4: Update the M&E Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine minimal viable indicators • Develop partner reporting templates • Establish quarterly learning loop 	Short-term
Priority 2	R1: Expand IDC + CSO engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add targeted agencies (eSafety, DCCEEW) Establish CSO advisory 	Short-term
Priority 3	R2: Align WPS to a security function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align the WPS function to a security-focused area within DFAT 	Short to medium-term
Priority 4	R6: Strengthen CRSV response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivor-centred WoG Standard operating procedures • Establish domestic linkages • Develop joint risk analysis guidance 	Medium to long-term
Priority 5	R10: Two-way knowledge sharing (domestic and international)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bimonthly virtual seminar • First Nations leadership pathways 	Short-term
Priority 6	R12: Digital safety & counter-disinformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop practitioners’ playbook • Facilitate one to two workshops on digital safety and disinformation • Integrate digital indicators into R8 	Short to medium-term
Priority 7	R7: Feasibility of a unified risk dashboard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12-week scoped feasibility study and federated prototype using existing data 	Medium-term

Priority	Recommendation	Initial Implementation Steps	Timeframe
Priority 8	R8: Gender-sensitive early-warning systems and rapid alerts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add 5–7 gender signals • Small Rapid Alert pilot 	Medium-term
Priority 9	R3: WPS integration into disaster, cyber & disinformation exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper-based table-top inject design in first year (no full exercises) • Identify opportunities to integrate WPS into existing security scenario planning 	Short-term
Priority 10	R14: Rapid Response Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small ring-fenced funding envelope • Explore options of existing funding mechanisms (no new fund establishment) 	Medium-term
Priority 11	R5: Operational WPS capacity uplift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate micro-training • One to two strategic adviser deployments as a pilot to consider operational benefits at post (coordinating with APS agencies and Defence). 	Short-term
Priority 12	R13: Expand mediator & community peace and justice leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small catalytic grants in one to two contexts 	Short to Medium term
Priority 13	R9: Co-fund regional WPS initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot co-funding a project with existing partner (e.g., UN Women/ASEAN/like-minded partner country) 	Medium-term
Priority 14	R11: Women's climate/DRR leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One targeted climate-security DRR pilot 	Medium to long-term

As the WPS NAP strategy shifts it would be important to consider the appropriateness of NAP outcomes and where they should be adapted in future iterations of the NAP.

Appendix A: Terms of Reference

WPS National Action Plan 2021-31

Midterm independent review - Terms of Reference (ToR)

1. Background

Australia's second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP 2021–2031) builds on the lessons learned from the first NAP (2012–2018), which was subject to both interim and final independent reviews. These reviews highlighted the importance of **strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E)**, **inclusive governance**, and meaningful **civil society engagement**.

The independent midterm review of the WPS NAP 2021-31 in 2025 will assess the progress, impacts, effectiveness, and relevance of the second NAP at its halfway point and provide recommendations to strengthen implementation for the remainder of the Plan's lifecycle.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the mid-term review is to:

- Assess the effectiveness of the NAP's **implementation** to date, including the **impact** of its activities.
- Evaluate the extent to which the NAP is achieving its intended **outcomes**.
- Identify challenges, gaps, and opportunities for **improvement**.
- Provide actionable **recommendations** to enhance implementation, coordination, and accountability mechanisms for the remainder of the NAP.

3. Scope

The review will cover:

- All **four pillars** of the WPS agenda: Prevention, Participation, Protection, and Relief and Recovery.
- Whole-of-government **implementation**, including coordination between departments and agencies.
- **Engagement** with civil society, academia, and international partners.
- **Monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL)** systems and data collection.
- **Budgeting and resource allocation** for WPS activities.

4. Key Review Questions

- Effectiveness:
 - To what extent have the NAP's objectives and outcomes been achieved to date?
 - Are the current activities and outputs aligned with the intended outcomes?
 - How does the NAP align with Australia's broader approach to conflict prevention, peace and security (such as in the Pacific)?

- Governance and Coordination:
 - How effective are the governance structures and inter-agency coordination mechanisms?
 - Are roles and responsibilities across the implementing partners clearly defined and operational?
 - Have the roles/functions of implementing partners changed (i.e. are there other government agencies which now hold relevant responsibilities and should be included as part of the NAP?)
 - What are the opportunities for continued / further bipartisan political collaboration, commitment?
- Monitoring and Evaluation:
 - Is the MEL framework robust, outcome-focused, and being implemented effectively?
 - Are there adequate data systems and indicators to track progress and impact (including performance evaluation)?
- Inclusivity and Participation:
 - How effectively has civil society, particularly women's organisations, been engaged?
 - Are diverse voices, including First Nations women and women from conflict-affected communities, being heard?
- Adaptability and Relevance:
 - Is the NAP responsive to emerging global and regional WPS challenges?
 - How well does the NAP integrate intersectional and inclusive approaches?
- Resourcing:
 - Are financial and human resources adequate and appropriately allocated across the implementing partners?
 - Is there transparency and accountability in WPS-related spending?

5. Methodology

The review will adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive assessment. The methodology will be guided by principles of participation, transparency, intersectionality, and accountability

- Relevant Document and Literature Review:
 - Review of key policy documents, including the NAP 2021–31, agency implementation plans, NAP progress reports, and agency-level strategies.
 - Analysis of relevant legislation, international commitments (e.g., UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions), and global best practices.
 - Review of academic and grey literature on WPS implementation in Australia and comparable contexts.
- Stakeholder Consultations (note, the number and location of stakeholder consultations will depend on final budget):
 - Semi-structured interviews with representatives from:
 - Government departments and agencies involved in NAP implementation.
 - Civil society implementing partners Civil society organisations, including women's rights groups, First Nations organisations, diaspora communities, justice practitioners, mediator networks.
 - Academia and research institutions.
 - International partners and multilateral organisations.
 - Commonwealth departments who have responsibilities across emerging priorities – e.g. DSS, DCCEEW.

- Focus group discussions with: Women with lived experience of conflict, displacement, CRSV.
 - Youth and emerging leaders in peacebuilding.
 - Defence, police, and peacekeeping personnel.
- Surveys:
 - Online surveys targeting:
 - Government staff involved in WPS programming.
 - Civil society stakeholders and community-based organisations.
 - Broader public awareness and perception of the NAP's impact.
- Case Studies:
 - In-depth case studies of selected initiatives or programs under the NAP, including:
 - Domestic initiatives (e.g., community peacebuilding, gender-based violence prevention).
 - International deployments or partnerships (e.g., peacekeeping missions, regional cooperation).
 - Each case study will assess relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, and lessons learned.
- Data Analysis:
 - Quantitative analysis of available monitoring data, including indicators from the
 - NAP's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework.
 - Qualitative thematic analysis of interview and focus group data to identify patterns, challenges, and success factors.
 - For all outcomes, assess implementation status against planned timelines and anticipated outcomes.
 - Gap analysis to identify areas where data is missing or insufficient for tracking progress.
- Ethical Considerations:
 - The review will adhere to ethical research standards, including informed consent, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity.
 - Special attention will be given to ensuring safe and respectful engagement with vulnerable and marginalised groups.

6. Deliverables

- Inception Report: Detailing methodology, workplan, and stakeholder engagement strategy.
- Draft Mid-Term Review Report: Including preliminary findings and recommendations.
- Final Mid-Term Review Report: Incorporating feedback and presenting final analysis.
- Presentation to Government and Stakeholders: Summary of key findings and recommendations.

7. Governance and Oversight

The review will be commissioned by the DFAT, in consultation with the NAP's Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group and the NAP IDC as required.

An Advisory Group comprising government, civil society, and academic representatives will provide oversight and guidance (TBC).

Table 4 First Addendum: Timetable

Date	Action
30 September	Contractual arrangement with consultant commences.
15 October	Inception Report due (methodology, workplan, stakeholder engagement strategy).
28 November	Draft Report due (preliminary findings and recommendations).
15 December	Final Report due.
15 December	Presentation to Government and Stakeholders.
20 December	Contract end date (with extension period).
15 January	Final contract end date.

Appendix B: International Comparator Analysis

NAP Period

Japan	United Kingdom	Canada	Philippines	Australia
2023-2028	2023-2027	2023-2029	2023-2033	2021-2031

First Implemented/ Frequency of Update

Japan	United Kingdom	Canada	Philippines	Australia
First developed in 2015 and is updated every five years. This is Japan's third NAP.	From 2006, the UK NAP has been updated every four years. They are currently on their fifth NAP.	First implemented in 2010, the NAP has been updated in 2017 and 2023. This is Canada's third NAP.	The first NAP (2010–2016, updated in 2014) was followed by the second NAP (2017–2022). The current NAP is the fourth generation and extends the planning cycle from six to ten years.	Australia's first NAP (2012–2018) was coordinated by PM&C. A second NAP drafted in 2019 was not implemented. The current NAP is the second implemented plan, led by DFAT.

How lessons learned are integrated into the most recent NAP

Japan	United Kingdom	Canada	Philippines	Australia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed the First and Second NAP through an Evaluation Committee that was established in 2016. Evaluation Committee consists of external experts and consults with international NGOs and civil society to draft the most recent NAP. Briefly outlines key changes between the second and third NAP including changes to measures and indicators. Delineation between international and national efforts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual FCDO and MoD reports track progress against NAP objectives with case studies. NAPs refreshed every two years with civil society and All-Party Parliamentary Group consultation. Independent reviews (e.g., GAPS shadow report) provide external assessment and policy advice. Latest NAP includes a summary of key changes from the previous plan. Parliament updated every two years, supported by: Year 1 baseline study (including focus countries); Mid-point evaluation at 2.5 years; Final evaluation at Year 5. Internal and external reviews ensure objectivity and credibility. Evaluation findings used flexibly to adjust activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two publicly available thematic studies are conducted over the course of the action plan by internal and external partners. Themes may correspond to emerging peace and security challenges, relevant geopolitical issues, and geopolitical areas. The Government of Canada reports to the Parliament annually through progress brief reports on key performance indicators, noting year-over-year changes. Biannually, progress briefs are accompanied by narrative reports with additional details on efforts by partners. The NAP undergoes mid-term and summative evaluations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A national, multi-stakeholder sunset review of the 2017–2022 NAP assessed achievements and gaps, generating the strategic direction for the new plan. Triennial review of the NAP to identify and implement new learnings. Specialised results-based management and monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) workshops were held while developing the latest NAP. Regular progress reporting is mandated through the MEAL system, including annual reports to the National Steering Committee (NSC) on WPS and external publics such as Congress committees. BARMM Regional Action Plan WPS assessments inform localisation challenges, community-level innovations, and intersectional gaps. Civil society provided informed improvements of the latest NAP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress reports are released every two years, primarily outlining case studies. An interim independent review and an independent final review are commissioned. Civil society is encouraged to produce shadow progress reports. A six-month reflection period exists to review recommendations and consider amendments to be finalised after the independent review.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Japan	United Kingdom	Canada	Philippines	Australia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual report on implementation that is evaluated by external experts. • The Evaluation Committee may request relevant ministries and agencies to report on and provide information on the status of implementation of the Action Plan • Provides an interim report in the third year and the final report in the sixth year. • The Committee can recommend revisions to the Action Plan and analyse the adequacy of goals, measures and indicators. • The government reports on the implementation of the Action Plan in periodic reports such as the CEDAW. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft indicators are linked to strategic objectives with quantitative and qualitative measures. • Delivery plan integrates commitments (incl. relevant quantitative targets) alongside lead implementation partners, draft indicators, and focus country specific indicators. This is organised by the NAPs strategic objectives and priority subheadings. • Indicators are only finalised one year after the NAP is first published through the baseline study to ensure alignment. • Indicators are localised and have been made more specific in the most recent NAP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A feminist approach is integrated into the MEL framework, prioritising collaborative and participatory processes. • Action plan reporting is focused on results instead of activities. • Only a limited number of results-oriented indicators are tracked annually. • Indicators are grouped into central key performance indicators and department/agency-level key performance indicators. • KPIs, focus areas, outcomes, and identification of the type of KPI are group together in the NAP. • Annual reporting includes progress, challenges and areas for improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A dedicated MEAL pillar replaces the previously limited M&E system and is informed by a collaborative results-based management approach. • Baseline setting and indicator refinement occur through a structured MEAL roadmap. • Indicators are not published in the NAP. An Indicator Handbook was published. • Mid-term outcomes (MO) and associated output and MO indicators are outlined, with additional information on disaggregation, focus area, definition, method of computation, data source, collection method, and frequency. • Action points from the NAP are linked to specific MOs. • A WPS database is being introduced in each implementing agency, integrated into the gender and development database. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies a results-based M&E framework. • Sources that report on each indicator are identified in the NAP. • Department implementation plans capture specific outputs that contribute to each outcome.

Government Coordination

Japan	United Kingdom	Canada	Philippines	Australia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NAP does not describe how agencies and ministries should work together to meet the indicators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The UK implemented a WPS Helpdesk in 2022, a call-down facility that provides high quality, evidence informed analysis and expertise on WPS issues to provide cross-government support. The NAP is jointly owned and lead by FCDO and MoD with further contributions from other departments. <p>Governance structures for coordination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A ministerial WPS Steering Board meets annually for senior-level oversight and external scrutiny. The Senior Officials Shadow Board holds senior officials accountable for delivery. The Cross-Whitehall WPS Working group holds monthly meetings to monitor progress and coordinate day-to-day implementation. The WPS Focal Points Network conducts monthly check-ins with posts in focus countries for support and troubleshooting. A WPS academic engagement group has quarterly sessions to integrate research into policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A coordination hub was established at Global Affairs Canada, facilitating communication across partners and with external stakeholders. The NAP is comprised of an overarching framework and implementation plans, or statements of support, by all 10 federal partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSCWPS is the central inter-agency coordination body mandated to manage, direct, integrate, monitor, evaluate and report on the implementation of the NAP. The NAP explicitly adopts a whole-of- government approach to ensure harmonised action across government, civil society, and the security sector. A Joint Memorandum Circular between the Philippine Commission on Women and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process mandates agencies and Local Government Units to embed WPS in their Gender and Development planning and reporting via Gender and Development Accomplishment Reports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An inter-departmental committee has been established for providing whole-of-government leadership and coordinating implementation.

Government agencies that support actions

Japan	United Kingdom	Canada	Philippines	Australia
<p>Each pillar has different responsible ministries and agencies listed, however, they are not tagged to specific actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peacekeeping Officer Secretariat • Foreign Affairs • Defence • National Police Agency • Fire and Disaster Management Agency • Japan Coast Guard • Japan International Cooperation Agency • Ministry of Justice • Cabinet Office • Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology • Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare 	<p>The delivery plan outlines which departments lead each commitment.</p> <p>Lead departments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FCDO • MOD <p>Additional departments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Office: domestic implementation, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), forced marriage, migrant victim support • Ministry of Justice: criminal justice reforms, victim support, Victims Bill • Northern Ireland Office (NIO) <p>Other supporting structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict, Stability and Security Fund: funds WPS programming and provides the WPS Helpdesk • Cross-Whitehall WPS Working Group: coordinates delivery across departments and ensures policy coherence • Ministerial WPS Steering Board & Senior Officials Shadow Board 	<p>Most partners have department or agency-specific implementation plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces • Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada • Department of Justice Canada • Global Affairs Canada • Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada • Canadian Armed Forces and Department of National Defence • Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada • Department of Justice Canada • Global Affairs Canada • Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada • Indigenous Services Canada • Public Safety Canada (with contributions from the Correctional Service of Canada) • Royal Canadian Mounted Police • Veterans Affairs Canada • Women and Gender Equality Canada 	<p>The NSCWPS brings together key agencies including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace • Reconciliation and Unity, the Philippine Commission on Women • The Department of National Defense • The Department of Foreign Affairs • The Department of Justice • The Department of Social Welfare and Development • The National Commission on Indigenous People 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Minister of Foreign Affairs leads the NAP, supported by DFAT. • The NAP is a coordinated whole-of-government partnership. • The Department of Defence, the Department of Home Affairs, the ADF, and the Australian Civil-Military Centre are implementing partners. • Each partner develops their own implementation plan.

Domestic actions

Japan	United Kingdom	Canada	Philippines	Australia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote women's participation in decision-making processes. Provide training on WPS, women's human rights and gender equality. Establish a gender officer in each department. Improve awareness in relevant ministries for the protection of human rights of all women in Japan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilise existing UK expertise, from MOD Human Security Advisors, the PSVI Team of Experts, academics, and civil society communities. Committed to implementing a world-leading domestic approach on the prevention and response to VAWG. Embedding WPS ideals in domestic systems, policies, military cooperation, and diplomacy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing GBV and discrimination through action plans like the Missing and Murder Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Action Plan. Committed to meaningful engagement with Indigenous Peoples and organisations in shaping WPS efforts. Security sector reform to support recruitment, retention, and career progression of women and gender diverse people. Targeted settlement supports for refugees and immigrants. Countering online harassment and extremism. Applying gender-based analysis plus to all policies and programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NAP primarily and overwhelmingly is concerned with domestic actions. The impact statement reads "The NAPWPS 2023-2033 is committed to transforming the peace and security landscape of the Philippines by guaranteeing equitable access to vital resources and opportunities to women in all their diverse and intersecting identities, leading to their substantive and meaningful representation, participation, and leadership in decision-making of the country's peace and security policies and programs." <p>The outward facing actions involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in international committees and peacekeeping. Alignment with international reporting (e.g., CEDAW, UNSCR 1325, ASEAN RPA WPS). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mainstreaming gender analysis through civil-military-police education and training. Increasing women's participation and leadership at all levels of implementing departments and agencies. Supporting research that clarifies the connections between gender, conflict and peace. Australia is committed to supporting women's economic security, leadership aspirations and taking action to ensure women and children are safe from violence domestically.

Cross-cutting themes

Japan	United Kingdom	Canada	Philippines	Australia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CRSV and impacts on women, sexual minorities and men. DRR and disaster response and response to climate change. GBV during disasters/conflict. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate change and environmental security's link with conflict; disaster induced risks, GBV. Cybercrime and emerging tech; the use of digital spaces by belligerent actors. Countering violent extremism and terrorist groups: how gender is used in their recruitment methods, communication and propaganda activities, and planning and execution of extremist operations. The proliferation of weapons, particularly small arms and light weapons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rise in climate emergencies. Increases in technology facilitated, GBV. Significant consideration for Indigenous women, girls, Two Spirit, and gender diverse people; anti-racist perspectives. Growth of anti-gender and anti-feminist movements, and the backlash against human rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DRR management and climate security. Health Security. Human rights, access to justice and legal reforms, and transitional justice. Masculinities and intersectionality. Digital peace and security. Promoting a culture of peace and tolerance through peace education in formal and informal channels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for women's leadership and participation in climate policy decision making. Recognises health pandemics (e.g., COVID-19) as exacerbating gendered vulnerabilities in crisis contexts. Preventing and countering violent extremism. International Humanitarian Law, International Human Rights Law; strengthening connections between WPS and human rights mechanisms.

Source: KPMG analysis (2025)

Appendix C: Stakeholder consultation summary

As part of this independent mid-term review, various stakeholders were consulted across Government, implementing and investment partners, and civil society. As part of the review framework, questions were asked under the broad themes of effectiveness, governance, monitoring, evaluation and learning, inclusivity, adaptability and resourcing. A summary of stakeholders is provided below. Additional Posts and civil society and investment partners were contacted for consultation but declined.

APS Implementing Partners

Department of Defence

Australian Federal Police (AFP)

Department of Home Affairs

Australian Civil-Military Centre (ACMC)

DFAT posts and teams

Myanmar

The Philippines

The Hague (The Netherlands)

Australian Permanent Mission to ASEAN

Australian Permanent Mission to the United Nations, Vienna

Australian Mission to the European Union and NATO

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (Africa Union)

Multilateral Peace and Commonwealth Section

Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion Branch

Australia's Ambassador for Gender Equality

Ministerial Advisors

Chief of Staff to Special Envoy for Climate Adaptation and Resilience

Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Women's Advisor for the Prime Minister

Women's Advisor for the Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Minister for the Public Service

Advisor to the Pacific Island Affairs Minister

Other Government Agencies

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW)

Office for Women

DFAT WPS investment partners

ActionAid Australia

Pacific Women Mediators Network

Southeast Asian Women Peace Mediators

Legal Action Worldwide

UN Women

Civil Society

Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security

A summary of consultation findings is provided below, grouped by thematic area.

Effectiveness

- **Progress Towards Objectives:** Progress is uneven. Some agencies (e.g., Defence, AFP) have integrated WPS into operations and training, but implementation is often ad hoc and siloed. Civil society notes that Australia's NAP is largely outward-facing, with limited domestic integration.
- **Alignment of Activities:** Many activities align broadly with NAP objectives but lack clear linkage to outcomes. Some programs are rebranded as WPS without substantive change.
- **Integration with Broader Policy:** WPS is increasingly linked to regional security priorities (Pacific partnerships, disaster response), but connections to climate security and technology-facilitated GBV remain underdeveloped.

Governance

- **Structures & Coordination:** The IDC and working groups exist but are seen as insufficiently responsive and siloed. Agencies call for clearer roles, stronger cross-agency collaboration, and inclusion of other departments such as OFW and the DCCEEW.
- **Role Clarity:** Roles are broadly understood but need updating to reflect emerging themes (cybersecurity, climate).
- **Civil Society Engagement:** Civil society engagement is seen internationally as best practice, although domestically, civil society seeks greater involvement in policy feedback mechanisms and being part of governance structures.

Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL)

- **Framework Robustness:** MEL systems are inconsistent. Defence and AFP rely on case studies and qualitative data; quantitative indicators are limited and skewed by external factors.
- **Data Gaps:** Lack of gender-disaggregated data and baseline metrics hampers impact assessment. Posts are requested to provide technical support for MEL systems, especially in multilateral contexts but lack the resourcing to provide this support beyond an ad hoc basis.

Inclusivity

- **Civil Society Engagement:** Engagement is streamlined through the ACMC and while civil society finds the dialogues with ACMC useful, they question the effectiveness of these mechanisms.
- **Diverse Voices:** First Nations perspectives are underrepresented; some efforts exist but are fragmented. LGBTQIA+ and disability inclusion is emerging but not mainstreamed. Regional voices are engaged effectively in program delivery (e.g. the Mediators networks) but influence on policy is limited.

Adaptability


- **Emerging Challenges:** Cybercrime, technology-facilitated GBV, climate-related security risks, and shrinking civic space are major concerns. Current NAP is seen as flexible but lacks proactive programming in these areas.
- **Intersectionality:** Agencies and civil society stress the need to integrate gender-climate-security nexus and youth engagement. Current efforts are piecemeal.

Resourcing

- **Adequacy:** Dedicated WPS budgets are rare; most agencies rely on mainstreamed funding. Posts and Departments report resource constraints limiting impact.
- **Allocation & Transparency:** Funding streams for WPS initiatives are drying up globally; Australia risks losing leadership unless it institutionalises and resources commitments.
- **Greatest Impact:** Investment in capacity building, convening spaces, and technical support for MEL and gender mainstreaming identified as priorities.

Emerging themes

- Domestic integration: various stakeholders called for greater integration of domestic initiatives into the NAP, as having an international focus can feel 'paternalistic' towards other countries. Australia can show leadership on its own domestic challenges while providing support for international WPS challenges.
 - First Nations voices can be better integrated into domestic initiatives, as well as consultation with diaspora communities to enhance social cohesion within Australia.
 - There were numerous calls to align Australia's NAP with other domestic plans, strategies and policies to leverage shared resources.
- Climate security: Civil society emphasised there would be increasing demand for mediation for climate change induced conflicts.
- Youth and intergenerational leadership: stakeholder consistently called out the importance of mentoring the next generation of leaders, especially in the mediation and conflict prevention space.
- Language barriers: Some stakeholders emphasised regional engagement can be hindered by English language requirements in programs, with recommendations to consider how emerging technology can be leveraged in translation.



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