

**Civil Society Submission to Danish Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security:
Options Paper for Danish Engagement on WPS Going Forward**

Introduction

This paper presents several options and recommendations put forward by Danish civil society actors following a two-day conference focusing on the Danish National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security. The conference coincided with the public release of the evaluation of the two most recent NAPs and included a Parliamentary Expert Meeting, where both the Minister for Development and the Minister for Defense recognized the importance of placing a renewed emphasis on Denmark's contribution to WPS. The NAP evaluation is an outcome of an ongoing and fruitful exchange between the Inter-Ministerial Working Group and the Civil Society Working Group. As emphasized by the Minister of Development Cooperation, Rasmus Prehn: "We can now use the evaluation as a really good tool to ensure that we become far more ambitious going forward."

While the civil society working group commend the renewed commitment to develop a more ambitious NAP, to what extent the recommendations presented in the evaluation will be addressed by the relevant Ministries it is not yet clear, nor is whether existing mechanisms such as the Inter-Ministerial Working Group or current WPS/NAP division of responsibilities within the respective Ministries will remain the same going forward. There are also questions as to whether this renewed political commitment will result in having dedicated human and financial resources explicitly focused on the WPS agenda, or whether existing funding and partnership instruments (such as the Peace and Stabilization Fund, or existing Strategic Partnership frameworks) will be leveraged or have a more deliberate focus on WPS.

Given these – and other – questions, this paper seeks to catalogue the various options and draw out concrete recommendations to inform the priority setting of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group in relation to the formulation and implementation of the NAP going forward. While some of these may entail additional costs, some require no additional financial or human resources, and some call for existing resources or mechanisms to be tweaked so they can have a greater focus or contribution to WPS outcomes. In other words, there is potential to do so much more simply by using the tools and resources in a more strategic way.

The paper draws on both key findings and recommendations of the recent NAP evaluation, as well as contributions from Danish CSOs provided at and in the run-up to the recent two-day the conference organized by the Danish civil society on 8th November 2019. The recommendations focus on enhancing Denmark's contribution to and leadership of the WPS agenda, recognizing the opportunities to pursue a distinct 'Danish niche'.

Substantive Focus

- **Framing the next NAP:** There are significant opportunities for Denmark to develop a niche when contributing to the WPS agenda. Taking into account the evaluation recommendations, the diversity of expertise amongst Danish civil society, and existing Danish priorities, civil society would propose the next NAP to be framed around the **"localization of the WPS agenda"**. This would enable Denmark to reinforce emerging areas of added-value cited in the evaluation report, including local level peacebuilding and conflict resolution, women-led humanitarian response, locally driven change agenda for women's human rights and engagement on SRHR and GBV, which are identified as the most impactful types of engagements in the NAP evaluation¹. It would also serve as a useful framework for domesticating certain strands of the WPS agenda in Denmark, as it e.g. relates to improving conditions

and support for women in asylum centers and in the asylum procedure or in the Danish Defense. By focusing on “localizing the WPS agenda”, Denmark’s engagement on WPS would reinforce its ongoing efforts in relation to the triple humanitarian/development/peacebuilding nexus and the localization agenda, while also serving to distinctly position Denmark in relation to other Scandinavian countries and their support to WPS, as identified in the NAP evaluationⁱⁱ. There is growing critique that much of the WPS agenda is reduced to tokenism of having “women at the table” but with little efforts to redress the structural causes of gender inequality. While Denmark is already allocating support across these thematic areas at country-level, it tends to be ad hoc rather than strategic, raising questions about the efficiency of Danish spend on WPS engagementsⁱⁱⁱ. By pursuing a more strategic and deliberate focus on locally adapting and grounding the WPS agenda, Denmark could both demonstrate vision and leadership amongst the international community, and more importantly, contribute to a more impactful and strategic use of its strengths, expertise and experience.

- Identifying focus countries and regions for collective support to WPS: As identified in the evaluation, the current NAP does not have a strategic focus on specific countries or regions. Whether it be in Afghanistan, the Sahel or the Horn of Africa, it is not uncommon to see parallel engagements from the Danish military or police, and programs funded in siloes under the peace and stabilization fund, or from humanitarian or development assistance. Rather, it is a collection of disparate initiatives supported by the different Ministries, without any connection between efforts in the pursuit of common objectives. While recognizing that there are key differences in how each Ministry engages on WPS, there is ample evidence from the NAP evaluation that adopting specific focus countries and regions in the next NAP would facilitate greater coherence and complementarities^{iv}. If ‘WPS priority countries/regions’ were to be identified, this could also help to ensure that WPS objectives are integrated across any Danish engagement and/or support in that country/region – including through the Peace and Stabilization Fund, the humanitarian and development assistance or other funding from MFA, such as the Danish Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP), as suggested in the NAP^v. This could further contribute to leveraging Denmark’s role as a ‘lean donor’ and contribute to more impactful bilateral partnership engagements at country-level across the WPS pillars, while pursuing synergies with other relevant, complementing priority agendas, such as the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda.
- Building on emerging areas of Danish added-value: The evaluation identified a number of areas that Denmark could consider as specific areas of added-value and ‘points of difference’, as compared with Scandinavian neighbors and other ‘like-minded’ countries. These included: i) Supporting the development and implementation of National Action Plans or Regional Action Plans; ii) local-level peacebuilding, and connecting from the local to national level processes); iii) humanitarian/development/peacebuilding/foreign policy nexus, including through for example linking SRHR and GBV prevention and response to women’s empowerment and livelihoods in a context specific manner to build wider Danish policy coherence. As Danish civil society, we believe that the banner of “localization of the WPS agenda” would provide a useful unifying and strategic framework connecting and building on these different areas of added-value. Accordingly, it should be considered into the next foreign and security policy for better policy coherence and alignment.

Process

- Consultation process: The next National Action Plan should be developed through a consultative process, allocating sufficient time and resources. Danish civil society actors propose a multi-track consultation process to inform the development of the next National Action Plan, involving engagement in Denmark as well as in focus countries and regions. The precise scale of the consultation

process will be determined by the resources available, though there are opportunities to leverage existing civil society partnerships and diplomatic presence in ways that require limited financial resources.

- The first track could involve consultations at country level in focus countries and regions, whereby women affected by conflict and crisis are engaged in a sensitive and inclusive manner. Relevant civil society organisations and community stakeholders, including women-led organisations, should be involved, including partners beyond the ‘usual suspects’ (ex. private sector actors). These interactions could be facilitated through collaboration between any Danish diplomatic representation and Danish civil society actors either present or with relevant networks in-country. One possible avenue could be to link to the upcoming review of country programmes in 2020-2021/2021-2022, such as in Mali, Burkina Faso and Afghanistan, which include NAP and gender equality programme components already.
 - The second track would involve consultations in Denmark amongst relevant civil society and community stakeholders, including diaspora networks. This could potentially be organized through relevant thematic WPS pillars to be included in the next National Action Plan, and again be facilitated in collaboration with relevant civil society actors and relevant clusters and networks, including the Danish Network for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (CPPB)^{vi}.
 - Finally, Danish CSOs are often part of broader European or global networks with comparative experiences and expertise on NAPs/WPS. As such, they could constitute a ‘community of practice’ involving civil society, community stakeholders, and relevant Danish ministries which would serve as a platform for ongoing exchange, capacity building, and lessons learned across the lifespan of the next NAP.
- Formal engagement in NAP development, implementation and monitoring: The involvement of Danish civil society actors in the recent evaluation process was a welcome step to strengthening the collective ownership of the National Action Plan.
- As noted during the Parliamentary expert meeting^{vii}, Danish civil society possesses experience and expertise which spans the breadth of the WPS agenda, in addition to in-depth knowledge, analysis, presence and local partnerships in Danish priority countries and regions receiving humanitarian, development assistance or other funding from MFA. Danish civil society organisations is keen to offer this expertise as a resource in the development of the next NAP and would suggest that civil society has a direct role in contributing to the drafting of the next NAP (similar to civil society’s engagement on NAPs in Ireland and the Netherlands).
 - As representatives of Danish civil society, we are keen to continue this collaboration, and to establish avenues for more formalized and regular collaboration and partnership in the design, implementation and monitoring of the next NAP. This could take shape in different ways, in part depending on the revised mandate and scope of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group. Formal inclusion in the IMWG would be one option, as would regular structured exchange between civil society and relevant ministries (perhaps twice a year).

Mechanisms

- Reinforcing existing funding and partnership mechanisms for WPS: While it cannot be assumed that the renewed political commitment to WPS will translate into additional resources to support WPS activities

either in Denmark or abroad, there are ways that existing funding instruments or partnership mechanisms can be tweaked to have a greater focus on and contribution to WPS.

- Rather than reflect disparate initiatives across numerous country and regional contexts, Danish civil society would recommend that the next NAP prioritize WPS initiatives in specific focus countries and regions. This would then allow for greater complementarity and linkages between contributions by different Ministries, which would bolster the prospects for collective impact. Should additional resources be made available to operationalize the next NAP, having a pre-identified and limited set of focus countries/regions together with a pre-defined set of thematic priorities and approaches would also help to guide the strategic targeting of any new funds.
- Should Denmark adopt the focus on the “localization of the WPS agenda”, the Danish NAP should place a priority on (and earmark resources for) support to the development and implementation of National Action Plans or Regional Action Plans in and of priority countries/ regions. This was one key area of Danish added-value identified in the recent evaluation. This approach would also create opportunities for Danish civil society actors and their partners present in those countries/ regions to contribute to such initiatives.
- Existing funding instruments, such as the Peace and Stabilization Fund, should earmark funding for WPS-related initiatives and adopt other measures to capture the fund’s overall contribution to the WPS agenda. One option would be to develop a ‘gender marker’ which rates the contribution of every project financed through the fund to objectives and outcomes which relate to the WPS agenda. This may be developed in line with the IASC GEN GAP gender marker which has previously been referenced in the current NAP. The UN Peacebuilding Fund has a similar mechanism, which has enabled both public advocacy and greater attention internally in gearing projects towards gender equality outcomes. Other funding, such as the Danish Arab Partnership Programme should also continue to have a strong focus on gender justice and support to organisations working for women’s participation in society at all levels.
- Existing Strategic Partnerships with Danish civil society actors^{viii} are key instruments for Denmark’s contribution to WPS, but at present these contributions are not systematically documented. The next NAP should make a deliberate effort to capture and capitalize off the existing contribution of Danish civil society actors to the WPS agenda and involve those civil society actors who do not currently have Strategic Partnerships with the Danish Government. These partnerships can also be a vehicle for identifying opportunities for further collaboration on the WPS agenda. This could also be more strongly reflected in the “DANCAP” review processes whereby the MFA commissions external reviews and evaluations of Strategic Partner activities.

Thematic focus

1: Domestication of the DK NAP:

- The NAP should commit to strengthen its domestic impact, which remains a missed opportunity in the current NAPs, including across the Inter-Ministerial Working Group overseeing the NAP. It is recommended that the Ministry of Immigration, who has relevant technical expertise on issues relating to the WPS agenda in the domestic context, is included into the IMWG to better track results, monitor and evaluate on the implementation.

- The next NAP should facilitate and strengthen the outreach and engagement with women and girls in Denmark who have been affected by conflict, including refugee women and asylum seekers, as well as diaspora communities, and ensure that they are included in decision-making about policies affecting their lives and that their international protection needs and rights of women affected by conflict are addressed and are incorporated into the ongoing work of the IMWG and the next NAP.
- It is further recommended that efforts to empower refugee women with relevant skills, capacities and opportunities are improved through more targeted counseling of women to create trust and explain asylum process to them; more case workers are trained on gender-sensitivity, so that they see gender and religion in their assessments; psychological screening are conducted in greater scale and scope; women's housing department are made be accessible to more, and should be on annual state budget.
- The Danish Defense should work persistently and professionally in creating a work environment that appeals to all sexes in terms of recruitment and retainment. As a first step, the Danish Defense should secure that its investigation into sexualised harassment experienced by serving personnel is professional and scientifically up to date.

2. Reinforcing the engagement by Danish actors on protection and human rights

- The NAP should ensure collective pursuit of gender equality objectives in line with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender Policy Accountability Framework.
- Improved attention to diverse protection needs, including SGBV and the application of an intersectional gender lens in humanitarian crises and displacement response; including at the domestic level in terms of Denmark's provision of protection to women and girls affected by conflict.
- Furthermore, it should include a prevention response as a key part of a comprehensive approach to WPS by, among other things, allocating resources for the engagement of parties to conflict and other relevant actors on preventing violations such as sexual violence in armed conflict.
- Finally, it should ensure the application of a nexus approach supporting protection, equality, empowerment, participation opportunities of women in post-conflict, conflict-affected and other fragile or emergency contexts.

3. Enhancing Denmark's support to local-level peacebuilding

- International actors have a key role to play in facilitating and promoting the meaningful participation of local actors in decision-making as necessary parties to negotiations and pushing for civil society voices to gain a safe space for their inclusion and representation in local, national and regional processes. National and local actors are at the core and should be the driving force of any peacebuilding process, ensuring sustainability of any agreement and laying the grounds for long-term social accountability.
- As such, Denmark should invest in gearing and upscaling support to women and women-led organisations in local-level peacebuilding, conflict resolution and mediation efforts, including by broadening efforts for stabilization to long-term and flexible support to local-level, while effectively complementing support to high-level peace and mediation efforts provided by other Nordic countries.

- Denmark should further ensure dedicated support to national society actors to establish civil society coalitions or networks related to WPS, and peacebuilding more broadly, which can be geared towards multi-level influencing and support through collective messaging and highlight local priorities in national fora and vice-versa and by facilitation linkages between women-led networks and peace process tracks at national level, including regional and global networks (such as AU's network for women mediators called 'Femwise').
- To increase the scope, impact and effectively address, mitigate and sustain peace efforts, support to local-level peacebuilding must also deliberately "go beyond the capital" to support women's engagement and leadership in a broad range of peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives at community and sub national level and seek to connect these disparate initiatives to strengthen impact and sustainability.

4. Step up Denmark's support to gender just societies

- Women's full and equal participation in WPS activities (broadly) require societal understanding of and support to gender equality. Societies that do not recognize gender equality are not conducive for the education, empowerment and promotion of women in all fields of society. Therefore, prioritization of concrete support to work on gender equality and women's rights is pivotal for the WPS agenda to succeed.
- Women Human Rights Defenders play a key role in demanding women's human rights and equal rights for all persons, including LGBTIQ. Their work should be recognized as crucial in moving towards greater gender equality, which is a precondition for women's participation and protection in relation to 1325 and the peace and security agenda.
- The possibilities for WHRDs to operate often decline in societies in conflict and in societies prone to conflict. WHRDs face high risk of public slandering, harassment, violence, imprisonment, disappearance, rape, torture and even killing. Moreover, in the case of WHRD, the harassment and violence are often sexualized. Therefore, acute support to WHRDs is needed to support their continued fight for women's rights, human rights and gender equality.
- Denmark should earmark financial resources to the promotion of gender equality and organisations working for women's rights. Moreover, mechanisms for acute support to WHRDs is needed to support their continued fight for women's rights, human rights and gender equality.

ⁱ Please see the Evaluation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, October 2019 p. 31, 63, 67, 76, 82.

ⁱⁱ Ibid: p. 75.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid. 40, 33.

^{iv} As indicated in the report, bilateral engagements achieved more concrete and consistent results than multilateral and regional engagements. "This finding is likely due in part to clearer and more structured monitoring and reporting of results in bilateral engagements, linked to more Danish oversight over accountability". Ibid, p. 33.

^v Ibid. 67.

^{vi} Ibid. 15.

^{vii} Please see <https://www.ft.dk/da/aktuelt/nyheder/2019/11/fnresolution1325>