

United States Department of State

FY 2014

Implementation of the U.S. National Action Plan on
***Women, Peace,
and Security***



Supporting women and girls isn't just right; it's also strategic. It's security. It's stability. When women and girls live free from the threat of violence—when they are able to pursue their ambitions and realize their full potential—economies thrive, stability spreads, and the entire world is stronger and more secure. That's why empowering women around the world isn't something extra for the State Department. It is foreign policy.

 John Kerry, Secretary of State

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The Department of State (hereafter the Department) is fully invested in the United States' commitment to protect and empower women in countries threatened and affected by war and conflict, violence, and insecurity. Given the Department's leadership role in U.S. diplomatic engagement, its foreign assistance programming, and robust relationships with civil society across the globe, the Department remains a key U.S. government implementer of the [U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security \(NAP\)](#).

Throughout its third year implementing the NAP and the Department's corollary [implementation plan](#), the Department integrated a focus on gender equality and women's issues into its diplomatic, security, humanitarian, and development efforts. Bolstered by growing investments in staff capacity, the Department launched new initiatives, built on ongoing activities,

and delivered positive outcomes in bilateral, regional, multilateral, and civil society engagements—all of which showcased the Department's commitment to the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda. In cases where new challenges to NAP implementation emerged—such as the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) or insecurity that caused a reprioritization of activities and impeded operational flexibility—the Department deployed creative diplomacy to ensure that gender equality and WPS issues remained part of diplomatic and foreign assistance efforts.

As the international community looks toward the 15th anniversary of UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution 1325, an ongoing assessment of lessons and obstacles affecting NAP implementation are helping shape the Department's future commitments to empower and protect women and girls in the service of international peace and security.





ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The following captures an overview of some of the Department's accomplishments in fiscal year (FY) 2014.

Objective 1: National Integration and Institutionalization

The Department integrated comprehensive and sustainable attention to WPS priorities in its policies and programs, especially in enhancing staff capacity. For example, the Department:

- Issued updated guidance to deepen gender integration across diplomatic, development, and operational activities through Policy Guidance Promoting Gender Equality and Advancing the Status of Women and Girls, which specifies links to NAP implementation.
- Delivered and further developed the Foreign Service Institute's (FSI) classroom training course on gender equality.
- Continued to lead the integration and review of gender objectives in interagency, regional, bureau, and mission-level strategies and related budget plans.
- Expanded the number of embassy and bureau working groups on gender to implement strategic commitments,

promote accountability, and enhance coordination among policy, programming, and interagency initiatives.

- Increased the number of mandatory requirements for including gender analyses in outside organizations' bids for foreign assistance funding.

TRAINING: WHY IT'S WORKING

"I've been a Foreign Service officer for 15 years, and have witnessed attempts to integrate gender into our work in Washington and the field. FSI's course on promoting gender equality lays the intellectual and contextual foundation for success. It also provides practical ideas for how to make it happen, and enables blue sky thinking on 'what it looks like.' The range of speakers from State, USAID, and the NGO community provided an instant network and resource base. To fulfill the Secretary's mandate of integrating gender into our foreign policy work, I believe some form of this training should be mandatory."

 Career Foreign Service Officer

Objective 2: Participation in Peace Processes and Decision-making

At grassroots, national, and international levels, the Department took deliberate steps to support women's leadership and participation in peace negotiations, community governance initiatives, security sector reform, and transitional justice and accountability processes. Whenever possible, the Department matched diplomatic leadership with corresponding investments in foreign assistance and public diplomacy, which mobilized public opinion and advocacy around women's political and civic roles. In bilateral diplomacy, the Department not only advocated for women's participation in decision making, but incorporated emphasis on gender perspectives in security dialogues and strategic cooperation frameworks. Among many achievements in regional and thematic engagement, the Department:

- Developed deliberate multi-track approaches to strengthen the active participation of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, especially in Afghanistan, Burma, Sudan, and South Sudan—often through a constellation of coordinated activities bringing together diplomatic, public affairs, and foreign assistance efforts.
- Advocated for women's participation in peacebuilding in Syria that paired U.S. diplomatic leadership with programming activities to enhance women's participation in governance programs; bolster women-led civil society's capacity to inform and participate in the January 2014 Geneva II negotiations; and promote women's access to senior U.S. and UN leadership.

- Reinforced women's political participation and civic leadership through training, capacity building, exchange programs, and the development of support structures for women candidates, party officials, and civil society representatives in countries across the globe.
- Enhanced women's leadership in the security and judicial sectors globally, as well as within peacekeeping operations, through: policies that encouraged gender-diverse selection of trainees; training that enhanced women's technical competencies; networking and professional development opportunities; and peer-to-peer engagement.

CREATIVITY IN SOUTH SUDAN

The 2013 outbreak of violence in South Sudan led to widespread insecurity throughout the country and significantly impeded the capacity of international actors to engage with women and civil society, including for the U.S. Embassy in Juba. In the face of operational challenges, such as limited access to local populations and a significant personnel drawdown, the embassy nevertheless maintained a holistic range of activities to support women's participation in peacebuilding. One particularly innovative effort, a Women's Monthly Forum, created a safe space for South Sudanese women's groups to coordinate their positions and activities during peace negotiations. The forum complemented other support for women leaders and demonstrated that maintaining support to women in challenging operational environments is possible.



*Women can be powerful participants
in any realm, from the corner store
to the corner office, from the seats
of Parliament to the peace table.*

 Catherine Russell, Ambassador-at-Large
for Global Women's Issues



Objective 3: Protection from Violence

The Department undertook significant efforts to protect and empower at-risk populations in situations of conflict, crisis, and transition through bilateral, multilateral, and public diplomacy engagements as well as training and assistance. Among its achievements, the Department:

- Operationalized the [U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Globally](#), a government-wide, multi-sector initiative that identifies, coordinates, integrates, and leverages existing efforts and resources to address gender-based violence (GBV).
- Expanded efforts to hold perpetrators of GBV to account through various efforts, such as: unveiling a new initiative that expands innovative practices promoting access to justice; building capacity for prevention, protection, and victim-centered prosecution efforts in criminal justice reforms, especially in countering trafficking in persons; and enhancing coordination among health, legal, and law enforcement professionals.
- Led multilateral efforts to strengthen peacekeepers' capacity to protect civilians from sexual violence in conflict, including through the development and provision of specialized training tools and scenario-based training for peacekeepers.

- Increased initiatives to engage men, including community leaders and religious figures, to lead positive norm change in promoting gender equality and preventing GBV.
- Continued supporting linkages across sectors so survivors of violence could access the resources they need to recover, reintegrate, and rebuild their lives and communities.

RIPPLE EFFECTS: HOW PROGRAM ALUMNAE ARE PROMOTING GBV RESPONSE

While participants in the Department's exchange programs are often selected because of their trailblazing work, their exchange experiences can also energize new initiatives. The Department provides resources to support exchange alumni in scaling grassroots work, especially GBV prevention. With this support in Ukraine, a group of alumnae are bringing women's perspectives into city planning. In South Korea, alumnae are delivering resettlement services to North Korean survivors of sexual violence. And in the Marshall Islands, not only did an International Visitor Leadership Program inspire two alumnae to organize around domestic violence legislation, but their activism inspired the U.S. embassy to champion those reforms in its bilateral diplomacy.

Objective 4: Conflict Prevention

Recognizing the influential role women can play as peacebuilders, the Department provided diplomatic support and capacity building for women leaders to catalyze or enhance their engagement in conflict prevention and stabilization efforts. Toward this end, the Department:

- Invested in building the capacity of women leaders and civil society to prevent and mediate conflict, including within early-warning and electoral violence prevention interventions.
- Supported networks of women to counter terrorism, especially in speaking out against violent extremism, engaging other women and religious leaders to recognize signs of radicalization to violence, and mediating community conflict to reduce violent extremism.
- Incorporated gender perspectives into regional and multilateral cooperation frameworks to respond to crisis and counter rising threats posed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.
- Strengthened efforts to promote women's economic security and improve their access to markets, including through bilateral trade diplomacy, exchange programs, and public-private

partnerships aimed to enhance entrepreneurship and access to technology.


- Strengthened women's and girls' access to health services and education, thereby enabling them to more fully participate in family, community, and political life, through programming and multilateral advocacy.

EMPOWERING MEN AS PARTNERS

Fast-growing efforts to engage men and boys are an exciting new frontier for the Department's work to prevent violence in the home and, more broadly, in the community. For example, in Afghanistan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, and Samoa, the Department has hosted public events and training programs that directly engaged men, including religious leaders, on their role as national or grassroots advocates for women. All over the world, the Department found receptive and enthusiastic male partners—offering an important lesson that challenges operational assumptions about the rigidity of gender roles and broadens notions of inclusion.



Words matter, but words alone do not shatter glass ceilings, actions do. And each of us—each of our governments—must act to ensure that half of the citizens of these United Nations will one day enjoy an equal chance to serve, to work, to live, to grow, and to thrive.

 Samantha Power, Ambassador to the United Nations



Objective 5: Access to Relief and Recovery

Throughout 2014, crisis- and conflict-affected environments presented uniquely challenging operating environments for humanitarian operations. Through diplomacy and humanitarian assistance, the Department promoted women's equal access to relief and recovery resources, advocated for their participation in managing those resources, and worked to advance the protection of women and girls in the design and implementation of crisis response. Among its achievements, the Department:

- Assumed leadership of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender Based Violence in Emergencies, an initiative mobilizing stakeholders to better protect women and girls and other at-risk populations in humanitarian emergencies, and began developing action and accountability frameworks to further coordinate efforts and maximize impact.
- Marshaled new resources toward related commitments to prevent and respond to GBV at the onset of emergencies around the world, specifically expanding Safe from the Start, originally announced in 2013.
- Highlighted the importance of meeting the protection and health needs of women and girls at multilateral and regional fora, such as through effective diplomacy at the UN Commission on the Status of Women, UN Commission on Population and Development, and in negotiations regarding the Post-2015 Development Agenda.
- Sustained efforts to prevent sexual violence and abuse perpetrated by humanitarian and UN peacekeeping personnel, especially through preliminary and periodic training,

peacekeeping vetting procedures, and expansion of accountability mechanisms.

- Financed durable solutions for the return and reintegration of refugees specifically addressing the needs of women returnees and their communities.

EBOLA: HOW LEADERSHIP BUILDS RESILIENCE FOR EFFECTIVE CRISIS RESPONSE

Although the Department routinely undertakes efforts to engage women and civil society when responding to crises, the EVD outbreak in West Africa demonstrated that pre-existing investments in women's leadership reinforced communities' ability to withstand the crisis. In Sierra Leone, a Department program intended to strengthen women's local leadership proved nimble in responding to the outbreak. One group leveraged its convening authority to host public outreach with health care providers and local populations on EVD response. The effort ultimately yielded recommendations adopted by the Government of Sierra Leone as standard operating procedures. Recommendations centered on the unique contribution of community response, for example by increasing women's participation in burial management, empowering local community members to trace contacts and provide psychosocial services, and elevating community leaders to bridge communication gaps between districts and the national government.

CHALLENGES

Challenges associated with the Department's implementation of WPS objectives in FY 2014 consistently stemmed from the instability and insecurity that is all too common in situations where WPS promotion is most important. Although the EVD crisis in West Africa led to a reprioritization of resources, activities, and planned objectives, it highlighted the importance of flexibility and creativity in the Department's WPS engagements in difficult operating environments.

Often, these complex local backdrops for NAP implementation were exacerbated by additional barriers, including perspectives that limit the full participation of women across cultural, economic, and societal spheres. In addition, limited capacity among government counterparts undercuts the political will necessary to convert international commitments into action and continues to preclude the development of budgets and institutional capabilities that drive local implementation and enforcement. At the civil society level, partners' varied administrative competencies and low financial absorptive capacity limited sustainability beyond the lifecycle of a grant. Often, this posed challenges for the Department in mobilizing long term

leadership at the grassroots level, especially among informal, nascent, or small organizations.

Although the Department continues to expand on its long term efforts to promote accountability for conflict-related sexual violence, especially in supporting integrated support and services for survivors, significant challenges remain in deterring such violence and holding perpetrators to account. Non-state actors, which perpetrate the preponderance of conflict-related sexual violence, are often difficult to identify and care little for global norms, thereby limiting the utility of traditional deterrence tactics, such as public condemnation, documentation, and economic sanctions.

Internally, resource and staffing limitations, limited training opportunities on gender-sensitive policy and programming, and robust yet uneven monitoring and evaluation to identify best practices and assess impact limits the Department's ability to more fully integrate WPS goals. Mitigating and overcoming these challenges will require dedicated diplomacy, creative outreach, and sustained capacity building efforts in the future.



We also need to look long-term, to the establishment of a rights-respecting society in which women are not just protected but empowered.

 Tom Malinowski, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor



RECOMMENDATIONS

Achieving success will require refining efforts to promote unique WPS initiatives concurrent with the full integration of gender perspectives into the Department's broader operations. In 2015, the Department will maintain its focus on high-impact actions that are necessary, achievable, and informed by those charged with implementation on the ground. These efforts will parallel an interagency mid-term review of the NAP, which provides a welcome opportunity to tackle persistent barriers and institutionalize recommendations drawn from lessons learned. Based on analysis of the short term impact of programming and diplomatic interventions, the following actionable recommendations will shape the Department's work in 2015:

Internal process

Expand staff understanding, capacity, and ownership of the NAP; further incorporate gender equality topics and analysis in bureau and embassy strategies; develop new tools and educational resources on WPS and gender integration; strengthen gender assessments, program design, reporting, and evaluation mechanisms across the Department; deepen engagement with interagency coordination platforms; and leverage the 2015 NAP review process to institutionalize WPS activities, promote emerging gender initiatives and objectives, and communicate about success.

External engagement

Identify linkages between WPS and broader U.S. government strategic priorities when engaging bilateral and multilateral partnerships; amplify efforts to meet with women leaders at grassroots and national levels to integrate their views into U.S. diplomacy and programs; expand effective initiatives and programs at country and regional levels; redouble focus on enhancing efficacy of the UN protection architecture; and advocate for the integration of WPS into multilateral processes. Entry points for multilateral advocacy include the UN-led reviews on peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and WPS as well as ongoing efforts to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Technical effectiveness

Invest in the capacity of civil society organizations to promote localized WPS objectives; offer greater attention to gender-responsive justice and security sector reform; commit to women's economic participation through targeted entrepreneurship investments; and enhance partner response and coordination to prevent GBV in humanitarian emergencies.

CONCLUSION

In putting the NAP into practice, the Department demonstrates its unfaltering commitment to the promotion of gender equality in service of U.S. foreign policy and national security. By improving how we do business—from investing in better training for diplomats to leveraging gender analysis in strategic planning to integrating gender considerations into our procurement—the Department is increasingly poised to support women in conflict prevention, stabilization, and recovery initiatives. However, the Department remains open to opportunities to expand its impact and routinely seeks new insight about ways it can better implement the NAP. Throughout 2015, an interagency review of the NAP's overall implementation since 2011 will offer a concrete

opportunity to deepen analysis of the NAP's impact, showcase practical lessons learned, and identify areas for the evolution or refinement of the Department's WPS activities. This review process will frame much of the Department's WPS engagement throughout 2015, paired with sustained activities that build on diplomatic and programming efforts undertaken in 2014. On the occasion of the 15th anniversary of UNSC resolution 1325, the review will additionally serve as a vehicle to highlight the Department's commitment to the WPS agenda and reaffirm the strategic importance of investing in women to advance peace and prosperity.

Even as the United States faces flashpoints and crises around the world, I can promise you we will never lose sight of the strategic priorities and opportunities of tapping the potential for women and girls around the world.

 John Kerry, Secretary of State

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