GIWPS Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security

POLICY BRIEF
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Implementing Women, Peace and Security: Reflections on 25 Years

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KEY FINDINGS

- **The adoption of policy instruments to support women in conflict has grown substantially** since the creation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda in 2000.
- The **expansion of WPS National Action Plans** and **increased inclusion of gender provisions in peace agreements and peacekeeping mandates** have been a hallmark of efforts to institutionalize the Agenda in national and multilateral policy forums.
- **Peace provisions** that acknowledge the specific impact of conflict on women and support their protection and inclusion in peace processes **have grown overall**, but their frequency has **dipped substantially since a peak in 2013,** from nearly half of peace agreements to just one in three in 2023.
- National Action Plans, which have been adopted by at least 112 UN Member States and some multilateral institutions, have helped develop concrete policies and actions in a number of settings in support of WPS. But **paramount is the imperative to effectively resource, implement, and update these instruments,** and to make them **more responsive to emerging threats** and opportunities in the face of reduced funding for the WPS Agenda worldwide.

In the 25 years since UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 was adopted, the international community has expanded the policy toolbox that aims to institutionalize and implement the WPS Agenda. These efforts have **deepened buy-in** and **increased resources** dedicated to WPS both nationally and internationally.

Commitment 2025 (C-25) has been tracking progress across three policy instruments integral to this landscape: WPS National Action Plans (NAPs), gender provisions in peace agreements, and gender-related language in mandates for peacekeeping missions. NAPs and their regional and multilateral equivalents create frameworks for organizing, resourcing, and implementing WPS across policy areas. In peace agreements and peacekeeping mandates, gender provisions aim to institutionalize commitments to integrate gender perspectives into efforts to address conflict, helping to develop more comprehensive (and potentially more effective) plans for peace.

A review of the expansion of these tools reveals **progress to celebrate**, while **illuminating ongoing challenges** in the realization of the Agenda. The number of WPS NAPs has proliferated substantially in recent years, adopted by 112 UN Member States (58 percent) by 2025. While this progress signals an investment in WPS policy and action, having a NAP alone is not enough. Many countries fail at delivering, resourcing, and improving implementation.[1] Similarly, gender provisions in peace agreements and peacekeeping mandates have increased significantly over the past 25 years, but here too gaps in implementation remain a concern, and there is limited documentation of how these provisions turn rhetoric into action. While their prevalence has grown overall, their number has dipped over the past decades, signaling potential undercutting of progress towards conflict reduction, given the links between the attention to gender and productive, lasting peace.[2]

This brief reviews progress in these three areas and tracks opportunities for furthering work to advance WPS in the context of C-25, an effort initiated by the governments of Finland and Spain and 13 signatory countries that provides a framework to monitor progress on WPS. [3]

Gender provisions in peace agreements grow overall, but see a recent decline

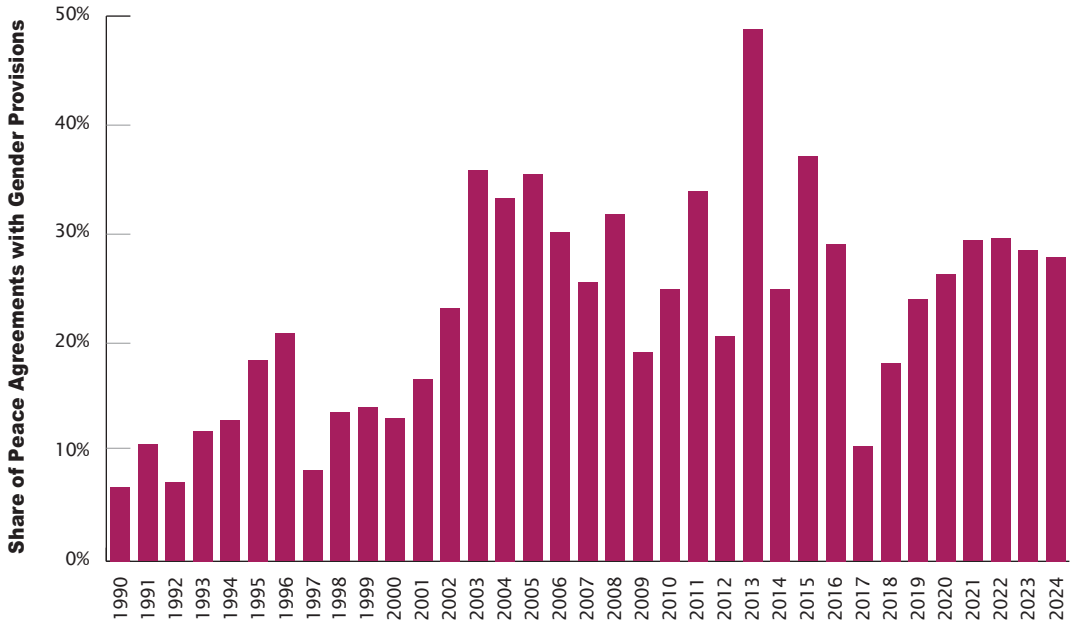
Gender provisions in peace agreements offer a vital tool for securing more inclusive and effective peace. These tools, though important, are not sufficient on their own—they require supportive actions to ensure they are meaningfully implemented.

Negotiations that ignore the specific impacts of conflict on women are less common today, as the recognition of gender issues as fundamental to the achievement and sustaining of peace has grown since UNSCR 1325 was adopted. The 2013 agreement in the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, called for prosecuting perpetrators of sexual violence, and the 2024 agreement in South Sudan aimed to increase women's representation in public institutions to at least 35 percent.[4] The presence of these provisions does not guarantee implementation, but they are associated with increased women's political and economic participation in post-conflict societies, as well as improved chances for more gender-equal outcomes, such as in health, education, and economic and political participation, which in turn can promote continued stabilization in a post-conflict society.[5] Their inclusion often also indicates that the development of the agreement was more participatory and more likely to include women's civil society coalitions, making the accord more likely to last. [6]

The presence of gender provisions in peace agreements rose from less than 10 percent in 1990 to almost 50 percent in 2013 (figure 1). That peak occurred in conjunction with major peace processes in the Central African Republic, Sudan, and the Philippines. 2015 also saw a sharp, but smaller, rise in gender provisions, with peace processes unfolding at the time in Colombia and Myanmar.

But these numbers have begun to decline over the last decade. The most recent data shows **a dip** in their use **to just under 30 percent of all**

Figure 1: Gender provisions in peace agreements, 1990–2024



Source: PA-X Women, Girls, and Gender (PA-X Gender) Database (https://www.peaceagreements.org/agreements/wggsearch/?search_type=search-gender&match_any_issues=True&name=&text=&signed_after=&signed_before=)

peace agreements in 2023. This may, in part, be attributable to the decrease in the number of UN-mediated peace processes in recent years.[7] Research shows that UN mediation, and international involvement in general, correlates with an increase in the likelihood of gender provisions.[8] UN special envoys have not been considered for major recent conflicts such as those in Gaza and Ukraine, and longstanding missions in Sudan, Iraq, and Yemen have been withdrawn or sidelined alongside a paralyzed Security Council. Conflicts are increasingly being mediated by third parties, such as Qatar and Kenya, instead of UN actors.[9]

These shifts indicate the importance of examining and addressing the UN's reduced role in peacemaking and the potential consequences for inclusive peace agreements. The change also increases the importance of promoting other mediators in advancing the WPS Agenda. These dynamics underscore the need for the need for sustained advocacy to ensure WPS commitments are protected and upheld in both UN and non-UN-mediated processes.

The incorporation of gender-sensitive provisions in more recent peace efforts, including quotas for women in the transitional government and peace-building committees in Sudan's 2020 Juba peace agreement, have signaled important potential. But these changes require broader supportive actions and stronger language alongside greater documentation around how these processes can drive lasting change. In the case of Sudan, even with these provisions, women reported being excluded from talks, highlighting the centrality of ensuring continued investment in implementing these commitments. Promoting multilateral mediation in conflicts may serve as an opportunity to increase the prevalence of agreements applying a gender lens.

Figure 2: Rise in UN peacekeeping mandates with gender provisions, 2000–2024

Figure 3: WPS provisions in peacekeeping mandates

	Sexual and gender-based violence and exploitation	Women's participation in politics, policing, and security	Gender advisors and women protection advisors	Gender-related reporting
MINUSCA: Central African Republic (Resolution 2759)	✓	✓	✓	
UNMISS: South Sudan (Resolution 2779)	✓	✓	✓	✓
MONUSCO: Democratic Republic of Congo (Resolution 2765)	✓	✓	✓	✓
UNISFA: Abyei Area (Resolution 2760)	✓	✓	✓	
UNFICYP: Cyprus (Resolution 2771)	✓	✓		
UNIFIL: Lebanon (Resolution 2539)	✓	✓		✓
MINURSO: Western Sahara (Resolution 2468)	✓	✓		
UNDOF: Israel and Syria (Resolution 2766)	✓	✓		

Source: Analysis of UN Mandate text building on IPI report (2021) and UNOPS raw data analyzing mandate text provided to GIWPS, June 2024

WPS language in peacekeeping mandates becoming less common

Peacekeeping mandates that include language to recognize and address gender-based violence, women's participation in politics, and other WPS areas are also linked to improved outcomes, including reductions in sexual violence and increases in operational effectiveness.[10] These provisons became more common after the adoption of Resolution 1325, but like gender provisions in peace agreements, their frequency is **trending downward**.

In the 2000s, only two out of 50 peacekeeping mandates included language on WPS-relevant issues: the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) and the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) both included language relevant to gender issues, primarily related to health in conflict and the prevention of HIV/AIDS.[11]

Today, **there are over 100 gender provisions in peacekeeping mandates.** However, **this is still a decline from a peak in 2018** (figure 2). It is unclear what is driving this change, and it may relate to the number of mandates and provisions overall over time. This trend requires deeper analysis into what is driving any change.

Most peacekeeping mandates today mention gender-based violence and women's political participation (figure 3). However, **fewer provide more detailed content related to implementation,** such as provisions for the inclusion of gender advisors or mandates for gender-related reporting, **signaling areas requiring attention.**

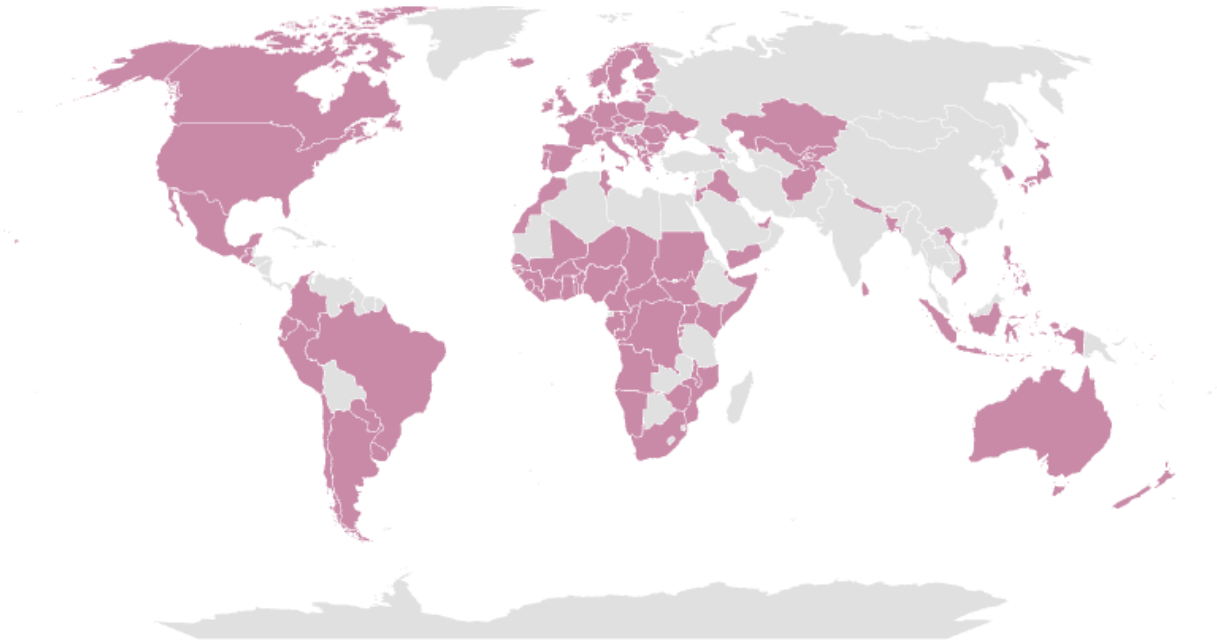
WPS National Action Plans on the rise, but require focus on implementation

The expansion of WPS NAPs since 2000 has been a hallmark of the WPS Agenda. Though NAPs do not ensure full attention to WPS in practice, they can help place WPS issues on the agenda of policy leaders. Additionally, WPS NAPs are widely recognized as vital to improving operational effectiveness by helping drive a focus on gender issues. The formation of a national action plan provides an important opportunity to coordinate action among diverse stakeholders across government institutions, as well as an entry point for civil society to voice their priorities through consultative processes. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), for example, has identified WPS NAPs as productive tools for their work because they "provide an opportunity for national stakeholders to identify priorities, determine responsibilities, allocate resources, and initiate strategic actions."[12]

Since the passage of UNSCR 1325 in 2000, the **growth in use of NAPs has been sizable. Today, 112 UN Member States (58 percent), representing a diversity of regions, economies, and security contexts, have adopted WPS NAPs (figure 4).** While most of these states have developed one NAP to date, 27 have developed two; 15 have developed three; six countries are on their fourth; and two countries are on their fifth.

Iterative NAP development in several Member States indicates enduring commitments, as well

Figure 4: UN Member States with WPS NAPs, June 2025



Source: WPS Focal Points Network, as of June 2025 (https://wpsfocalpointsnetwork.org/resources/)

as efforts to refine and improve plans based on lessons learned. In other contexts, conflict has led political leaders to revise prior NAPs. For example, after the onset of war in Ukraine in early 2022, the Government of Ukraine strengthened its 2020–2025 NAP to emphasize conflict-specific provisions, including the need to address and prevent conflict-related sexual violence, human trafficking, and civilian deaths.[13]

Regional efforts also indicate notable progress. WPS plans implemented by the European Union (EU) (2019–2024), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (2021–2025), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (2022) and the African Union (AU) (2018–2028) signal cross-national investment to coordinate and expand the WPS Agenda regionally:

- The EU Action Plan mandates WPS training for all staff, requires member states to implement NAPs, and integrates WPS perspectives into peacekeeping.
- NATO's Action Plan highlights technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), calls for gender advisors in operations and planning, and commits to addressing sexual harassment in its missions.
- ASEAN's Regional Plan of Action builds in a focus on non-traditional security challenges tied with regional priorities, including climate change and natural disasters, pandemics and humanitarian crises, and economic insecurity.
- The AU Action Plan sets goals to expand free education for girls aged 3–18, criminalize violence against women, and eliminate legal discrimination in areas like inheritance, wages, and employment.

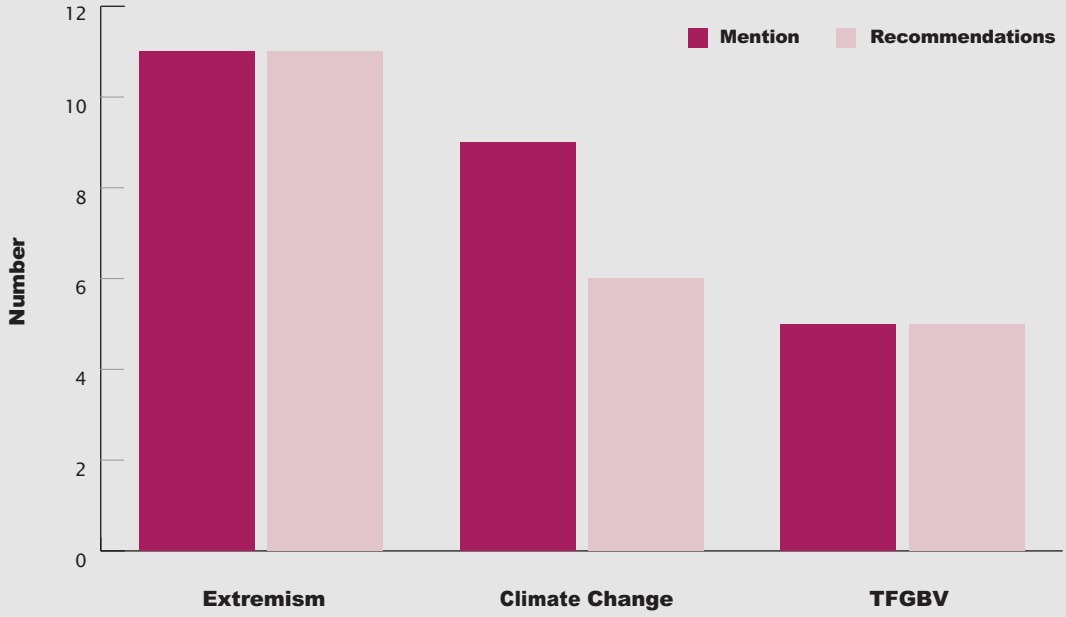
These regional efforts have driven important changes. Following implementation of the AU NAP in 2021, for example, the first advisory group on WPS was created, coordinating with AU Liaison Offices in Somalia, the Central African Republic, Burundi, and Côte d'Ivoire to implement

BOX 1. C-25 COUNTRY NATIONAL ACTION PLANS

All Commitment 2025 countries have WPS NAPs, and some are updating them. Analysis of C-25 country NAPs indicates several emerging thematic areas (figure 5). Since 2000, C-25 country NAPs have increasingly focused on gender and extremism (11 of the 13 C-25 NAPs). More recently, NAPs have also expanded to include a new focus on gender and climate change (9 of 13 NAPs) and TFGBV (5 of 13 NAPs).

Notably, however, climate change has comparatively fewer concrete recommendations included alongside discussion of these issues, when compared with gender and extremism and TFGBV. Connections between climate and gender are an important area for prioritizing focus in future iterations of NAPs to move rhetoric into action, and an area of emerging focus.[17]

Figure 5: Emerging themes in WPS NAPs, C-25 countries, 2024



Source: GIWPS Analysis of C-25 Country National Action Plans as of 2024

WPS-related initiatives. Additionally, a number of AU countries passed legislation to eliminate legal discrimination, such as Liberia's 2019 Domestic Violence Act and a series of 2019 laws in Côte d'Ivoire strengthening women's rights to inheritance and equality in marriage.

However, the implementation of NAP commitments varies, and some are outdated signaling limited durability. **Approximately 30 percent of NAPs are outdated**, having expired in 2022 or before.[14] Afghanistan, for example, adopted its first NAP in 2015, intended to last until 2022. However, women were continuously excluded from US-Taliban talks in 2019, and since the regime regained power in 2021, women have been harshly discriminated against, rendering obsolete the promise of past WPS policy instruments.

Resourcing NAP implementation continues to be a challenge. Countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo have faced issues financing efforts to implement their plans. In other settings, such as Canada, funding plans have been incorporated into the NAP, but work is ongoing to increase financial support and more fully integrate WPS perspectives across foreign and domestic peace and security activities.[15]

Conclusions

Over the past 25 years, policymakers have increasingly sought to recognize and address women's specific experiences in peace and security. This progress, visible in the expansion of tools and instruments, such as WPS NAPs and gendered provisions in conflict-related mandates and agreements, has driven significant gains for peace.

Still, commitments to gender equality in peace and security frameworks remain uneven and, in many settings, under-resourced. Gender provisions appear in less than 30 percent of peace agreements today. The precipitous decline from a peak of 50 percent in 2013, should raise alarm bells that sustained attention and global coordination are urgently required to prevent further rollbacks in progress.

WPS advocates also continue to call for greater attention to updating, resourcing, and implementing NAPs. Investing in NAP development can pay dividends, driving policy and program implementation, and expanding opportunities for multi-sectoral collaboration on WPS-related issues, including with women civil society leaders.

While these instruments continue to grow in number and in visibility, many require updating. To increase effectiveness, NAPs need to be complemented by implementation plans and guidance and dedicated financial and human resources. To ensure relevance and impact, NAPs must as contemplate emerging priorities that shape WPS outcomes, including climate insecurity, cyber-security, and artificial intelligence.[16]

Since women's inclusion is important for long-term peace, attention is needed also to enhance the domestic implementation of WPS goals (such as by focusing on equality and nondiscrimination within domestic militaries and security spaces, for example) alongside foreign application. Additional efforts are also needed to capture when, where, and how NAPs are achieving transformative change to document good practices that could be replicated and scaled. This includes greater

focus on quantitative and qualitative metrics of success that are meaningful to local actors. While some research examines the policy effects of these tools, less is known about how local actors leverage NAPs to mobilize, negotiate, and influence peace efforts, and how they adapt them to local needs and priorities to generate greater impact for women in communities.

This 25th anniversary year of UNSCR 1325 offers an opportunity for UN Member States to reaffirm their commitments to gender-inclusive peace and security, and to ensure that existing instruments are adequately resourced. But we cannot stop there. More work is needed to ensure institutions and governments resource these instruments alongside complementary endeavors to ensure peace actions are responsive to the needs of women and girls in crises. Without critical analysis across settings of the potential and limitations of various policy instruments, the rewards of the WPS Agenda will remain underrealized.

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