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Report on the Status of Norwegian Support to Women, Peace and Security

Jenny Lorentzen and Ingvild Brox Brodtkorb

Acknowledgements

Norwegian Institute of International Affairs

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Summary

This year marks 25 years since the adoption of the landmark Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) by the UN Security Council. This report aims to provide an overview of Norwegian support to WPS, with a focus on the work of the Foreign Service in the priority countries identified in Norway's National Action Plan for 2023-2030 (NAP). Based on interviews, conversations, observation and desk research, the report discusses the support to WPS and the challenges to implementation in the priority countries. The report also addresses aspects related to institutionalization and mainstreaming, as well as monitoring the progress of implementation and results.

The report finds that there is a high degree of knowledge in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA) regarding the work and support to WPS. This is most visible in areas such as peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements and in humanitarian response, while other areas are still under development. This level of capacity and knowledge, paired with broad and flexible funding, has enabled Norway to influence processes and outcomes at the international, national, and local level.

This report finds that Norwegian support to WPS is broad and complex. The support takes multiple forms, including funding to UN agencies and to international, Norwegian, and local NGOs, deployments and secondments to peacekeeping missions and international and regional organizations, as well as support to building capacity and knowledge (hereunder strengthening civil society in partner countries and research both in third countries and Norway). Getting a complete overview of the totality of this support is somewhat challenging. This is because no budgetary lines or markers exist that allow for measuring how much financial support goes to initiatives on WPS. Further, this report identifies a range of diplomatic normative and institutional work. These are important tools and practices in the Norwegian support to WPS, but they are not always easily measured. Activity under this umbrella includes, for example, the work by Norwegian diplomats (in collaboration with other likeminded countries) to promote WPS in NATO and in other multilateral organizations. Another example is the work done by Norwegian diplomats, Special Envoys, embassies, and partner organizations, who engage in direct engagements, dialogue, training, and capacity building with women and women's networks to prepare them for participation in peace processes.

As part of its diplomatic normative work, Norway has assumed leadership of networks and initiatives established to promote the WPS agenda (e.g. the UN Global Compact and WPS Focal Points Network). Norway further supports the WPS agenda through diplomatic normative work in institutional contexts and has been considered a global normative leader on WPS for quite some time. We see, however, that WPS work, particularly in some institutional settings, is facing increasing resistance. For example, the WPS agenda is currently under pressure in NATO due to resistance from the US. While we consider such contestation and resistance to the WPS agenda a challenge for its implementation, it should also be seen as a window of opportunity for Norway to further solidify its position as a global leader on WPS.

When it comes to Norwegian support to WPS in the priority countries we have categorized this into Support to and Through the UN system; Support to and Through International, Norwegian and Local Civil Society Organizations; Support for Creating Spaces and Platforms for Engagement; and Political Dialogue with Authorities and Support for Policy Development. We find that in challenging contexts with restricted access, Norwegian support is often channelled through the UN. The efficacy of channelling through the UN system varies depending on context and the strength and competence of the country team in question, as well on as the ability of the UN to reach local organizations working on the frontlines.

Norwegian support in the priority countries is also distributed through a network of international and Norwegian NGOs, who partner with local organizations (many Norwegian NGOs are present in conflict areas where Norway no longer has a diplomatic presence). Many of these organizations have extensive networks of local partners with contextual knowledge and experience on WPS-related issues. In response to the outbreak of violent conflict, in many cases Norway adopts a flexible approach so that activities are implemented wherever conditions allow. In some cases, changes in country contexts have prompted Norway to shift from providing direct support to national authorities and civil society organizations, to funnelling support indirectly through Norwegian and/or international organizations.

Beyond financial contributions, a major part of Norway's efforts to promote the WPS agenda in the priority countries involves engaging in political and diplomatic dialogue, facilitating platforms, arranging workshops, and advocating and raising awareness of the agenda in various platforms and forums. In several priority countries this involves using the Norwegian embassy as a meeting place, a practice which has become a diplomatic tool for supporting women actors in influencing peace processes. Norway also engages in dialogue on WPS with authorities in priority countries. An important aspect of this work includes support for the development and implementation of 1325 National Action Plans.

All missions in priority countries support initiatives on WPS. We find, however, that there is significant variation in this support. In those countries where Norway plays a role supporting a peace process – and especially if Norway also has an embassy in the country – the attention to and scope of the WPS effort is positively affected. The impact of Norwegian or Norway-supported WPS efforts are often dependent on the political context in which Norway and its partners operate in. In some contexts, there are projects where WPS/gender is not a defined target because it is very sensitive. In the priority countries where Norway is not represented by a permanent mission, Norway's WPS efforts are often more limited and sometimes more reliant on international actors operating in the country in question. Staff in missions further report that they do not always find they have the time to follow up on WPS-related issues and tasks as much as they would like. How much time and resources embassies can dedicate to WPS depends on several issues, including the size of the embassy, the workload of individual staff, whether staff are able to work on the WPS portfolio over time (i.e. staff turnover and rotation), and to some extent on personal interest and dedication.

We find that the 2023-2030 NAP has thus far been successful in setting overarching priorities and in mobilizing and raising awareness. Yet there is variation in the extent to which the NAP is a driver or tool of (top-down) strategic implementation of efforts. For most interviewees, the NAP serves as guidance, but it is not the only document where strategies and goals on WPS are formulated. At the time of writing, the there is no results framework or reporting tool for tracking the implementation of the 2023-2030 NAP and this lacuna makes the assessment of the NAP's implementation more difficult.

Regarding institutionalization and mainstreaming across the foreign service, we find that many important tools, frameworks, policies and practices have been established, but that this work is somewhat uneven and requires continued effort. There is, however, a risk that the work with institutionalizing and building knowledge about the WPS agenda in the Foreign Service will gradually erode if the focus on WPS as a priority of Norwegian Foreign Policy is not maintained. As the Foreign Service navigates an increasingly demanding global environment, other issues may take precedence. In this situation, maintaining WPS as a priority must be a strategic decision, and buy-in must be sought from the Foreign Service at large not just from a few dedicated individuals.

The global backlash against the WPS agenda and gender equality and women's rights more broadly is cause for concern and should be a call to action for Norway, which is considered a global leader on WPS. The pace and severity of the global changes we are now seeing demands a high level and strategic discussion about how Norway will adapt its WPS strategies to these new realities. As such, Norway must strategically reflect upon how to promote the WPS agenda in the coming years, including how to build on and leverage existing and new partnerships. However, WPS as a policy area also has great potential to create room for engagement. One example of this is the increased contact and cooperation with OSCE countries from Central Asia and the former Soviet States on developing or updating WPS NAPs.

Acronyms

1325 NAP – National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security

ACCORD – The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes

AU – African Union

CRSV – Conflict-Related Sexual Violence

DIRCO – Department of International Relations and Cooperation in South Africa

ICRC – International Committee of the Red Cross

ISS – Institute for Security Studies

MoU – Memorandum of Understanding

NMFA – Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NMFA – Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

NORCAP – Norwegian Capacity to International Operations

UNOCHA – United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

ODA – Official Development Assistance

OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

SGBV – Sexual and gender-based violence

SPT – Specialized Police Team

UN – United Nations

UNFICYP – United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund

UNMISS – United Nations Mission in South Sudan

UNSC – United Nations Security Council

WPHF – Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund

WPS – Women, Peace and Security

1. Introduction

In 2000, the UN Security Council adopted UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on Women, Peace and Security. The resolution was considered a breakthrough in the recognition of women's role in preventing and resolving armed conflict and represented a step forward in understanding how conflict affects women and men differently and how the needs of men and women must, therefore, be addressed specifically. UNSCR 1325 was followed by a total of nine additional resolutions[1] on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) adopted by the UN Security Council, which together form the WPS agenda. The WPS agenda has had a significant impact on local, national and regional policy formation, including through the formulation of National Action Plans (NAPs) by UN Member States. As of 2024, 112 countries had adopted a National Action Plan on WPS.[2]

The aim of this report is to provide an overview of Norwegian support to the implementation of the WPS agenda in the priority countries identified in Norway's National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security (2023-2030),[3] and to identify which aspects of Norway's WPS efforts work well or less well. The list of priority countries comprises Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Jordan, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, Palestine, the Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, South Africa, South Sudan, Ukraine, Venezuela and Yemen. The report is based on consultations and interviews with employees in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA), including with staff from relevant desks, embassies and missions, as well as on data on WPS initiatives and projects in the priority countries.

In the last 25 years we have seen significant gains beyond policy, such as changes to women's participation in peacebuilding, peacekeeping and conflict resolution, and in states and other actors' efforts to integrate gender perspectives into their practices.[4] More recently, however, the global context has undergone significant changes with dramatic consequences for the implementation of the WPS agenda. We live in an era marked by geopolitics and rivalry between great powers. This rivalry can be seen in a sharp increase in political and economic tensions between, for example, the United States and China. The Trump administration's large cuts in USAID's programs, as well as cuts from other donors, have serious consequences for the implementation of the WPS agenda. Many international and local humanitarian and development actors have been forced to end several aid projects because of the cuts, affecting millions of people worldwide.[5] This, in addition to the Trump administration's recent assertive objections to language on diversity, equity and inclusion in UN decisions, impairs the work of implementing the WPS agenda.
We also see changes to the global context in conflict patterns, such as Russia's war of aggression

1 UNSC/RES/1820 (2008); UNSC/RES/1888(2009); UNSC/RES/1889 (2009); UNSC/RES/1960 (2010); UNSC/RES/2106 (2013); UNSC/RES/2122 (2013); UNSC/RES/2242 (2015); UNSC/RES/2467 (2019); UNSC/RES/2493 (2019).
2 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) (2004). National Action Plans: At A Glance. WILPF. https://1325naps.peacewomen.org/. Accessed: 12 May 2025. More countries are in the process of developing and adopting NAPs.
3 Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2023) NAP 2023-2030. https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/norways-national-action-plan-women-peace-and-security-2023-2030/id2993862/?ch=1 Accessed: 02.05.2025.
4 See Sara E Davies and Jacqui True, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security* (Oxford University Press, 2019). https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190638276.001.0001.
5 J. Puri. & O. O'Sullivan (2025) First USAID closes, then UK cuts aid: what a Western retreat from foreign aid could mean. Chatham House. https://www.chathamhouse.org/2025/03/first-usaid-closes-then-uk-cuts-aid-what-western-retreat-foreign-aid-could-mean Accessed: 15.4.2025.

against Ukraine. In recent years, we have witnessed an increase in the number of armed conflicts and in the intensity of the conflicts. For example, the number of conflicts in 2023 where state actors were involved was the highest since 1946, and global conflicts have doubled over the past five years.[6] This has resulted in increasing militarization, with an increased focus on defence and military alliances, as well as in increased financial contributions to these. In this context, the WPS agenda must compete in a shrinking attention and financial space.

Furthermore, we see several countries moving in a more autocratic direction, including the weakening of democracy in established liberal democracies, the collapse of democracy in countries that were democratic, as well as the further development of autocracy in already autocratic states.[7] Such political changes make it more difficult for civil society and women's organizations to demand changes or reforms and to hold their governments to account. This is happening in tandem with the rise in antifeminism and resistance to gender equality by a range of actors that aim to undermine the policies that have characterized feminist agendas over the past decade, such as reproductive rights, LGBTQI+ rights and issues related to gender-based violence.[8] While antifeminism is not new, it has gained momentum in recent years, which also affects the institutionalization and implementation of the WPS agenda.[9]

The trends and developments described here affect Norwegian WPS policy, and how Norway should work to implement its 1325 NAP in the coming years. In the 25th year of UNSCR 1325, member states are not only taking stock of the progress of its implementation, but Norway and other actors supportive of the WPS agenda must also figure out how to respond to these challenges. This report proceeds as follows. First, we introduce the methodology, before we move on to discussing overarching priorities and trends in Norwegian support to WPS. We then zoom in on the work in the priority countries. Finally, we discuss challenges related to measuring WPS results and effects in the priority countries.

6 S. A. Rustad (2024) Conflict Trends: A Global Overview, 1946–2023. PRIO Paper. Oslo: PRIO. https://cdn.cloud.prio.org/files/92a7aad5-3572-4886-9e9c-8aa155f1d0f4/Conflict_Trends-2024_DIGITAL.pdf?inline=true Accessed: 15.04.2025; ACLED (2024) Decisive year ahead for resistance groups in Myanmar as they threaten new territories. https://acleddata.com/conflict-watchlist-2025/myanmar/ Accessed 15.04.2025.

7 M. Nord., D. Altman., F. Angiolillo., T. Fernandes., A. Good God and S. I. Lindberg. 2025. "Democracy Report 2025: 25 Years of Autocratization – Democracy Trumped?" University of Gothenburg: V-Dem Institute. https://www.v-dem.net/documents/60/V-dem-dr__2025_lowres.pdf. Accessed 04.04.2025.

8 E. S. Corredor (2019). Unpacking "Gender Ideology" and the Global Right's Antigender Countermovement. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 44*(3), 613–638. https://doi.org/10.1086/701171

9 A. Björkdahl, J. Lorentzen, & I Skjelsbæk. (Eds.) (Forthcoming). *Backlash Against the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Contesting Gender Norms.* Springer.

2. Methodology

The aim of this report is to provide an overview of Norwegian support to WPS in the priority countries identified in Norway's National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security (2023-2030), and to identify which aspects of Norway's WPS efforts work well or less well. The research behind this report has been guided by a set of questions focusing on Norwegian support to WPS, challenges to implementation, and results and effects (see table below). Through this work the report will contribute to a better understanding of the impact of Norwegian efforts on WPS. The findings are based on a qualitative analysis of data gathered through interviews, participant observation, as well as through the analysis and review of key documents and literature. We have also gathered data from Norad's project database.

Topic	Guiding questions
Norwegian support	What is Norway doing on WPS in the priority countries?
	Which aspects of the WPS agenda are covered through the various efforts?
	What is experienced as functioning well? Can best practices be identified?
Challenges to implementation	What challenges are experienced from the Norwegian side?
	Are there any areas, contexts, topics that are more challenging than others?
Results and effects	To what extent are the efforts perceived to be successful in achieving the goals that have been set?
	What is the effect of Norwegian efforts in the WPS field today and how is this assessed?
	What are the challenges ass ed with assessing the effect of Norwegian efforts on WPS?

Norwegian support to WPS is broad and extensive, and for the purposes of this report it has been necessary to limit the scope. The current NAP, which serves as our point of departure, was launched in 2023. The report therefore mainly focuses on work and priorities in the years 2023 and 2024, except in cases where efforts have been under way for a longer time-period and are key to understanding ongoing efforts. We also focus on the work of the NMFA and its embassies and missions in the priority countries, as defined in the assignment. While the 2023-2030 NAP has a more than national focus than previous NAPs, this report focuses on the work of the foreign service.

3. Norwegian support to WPS: Overarching and thematic priorities

3.1. Overarching priorities and trends

Efforts to link gender equality and women's rights to questions of peace and security gradually entered Norwegian foreign policy in the 1990s, together with priorities linked to human security and peace operations.[10] Norway supported the adoption of UNSCR 1325 in 2000, but more substantive efforts to integrate these questions into Norwegian foreign policy started in 2006 with the launch of Norway's first national action plan (NAP). The plan had three thematic chapters (International efforts and peace operations; Conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding; and Protection and human rights). The second, third, and fourth NAPs were then launched in 2011, 2015, and 2019, respectively. Norway is currently on its fifth NAP, which commenced in 2023 and applies to the period up to 2030. While the second NAP had already identified certain countries that would have a special focus in Norwegian efforts, the third NAP introduced the concept of priority countries. Ten priority countries were identified for the implementation period for the fourth plan. In the current NAP, the list of priority countries is continued and now numbers 18.

The current NAP (2023-2030) has three chapters defined as thematic priorities: Peace processes and implementation of peace agreements; Security policy and operations; Humanitarian efforts, protection of civilians and human rights. Under each main thematic priority there are several sub-themes. Among the sub-themes we find both a continuation of themes from previous NAPs (e.g. implementation of peace agreements), as well as some new themes, such as women and climate, peace and security. In addition, the focus on more domestic themes, such as the protection of the population nationally and asylum policy, has been continued and strengthened. Sections 3.2-3.4 provide an overview of the support to WPS according to the three thematic priorities.

Norway's approach to WPS has been characterized by broad and consistent support over time, global leadership and normative work, and collaboration with civil society and research environments.[11] A variety of tools and approaches have been utilized to advance the WPS agenda in international, regional, national and local contexts. According to the WPS guidelines for the Norwegian Foreign Service (2023–2030),[12] Norway's international efforts on WPS are implemented through normative processes in multilateral forums; by pursuing active political dialogue with authorities in various countries and engaging broadly with civil society; through financial support for WPS-related efforts; through support and funding for local, Norwegian and international civil society organizations working on peace and security; and through the support for and use of research.

10 Tryggestad, T. L. & Lorentzen, J. (2025). Kvinner, fred og sikkerhet i norsk utenrikspolitikk: En politikk under press. *Internasjonal Politikk*, 83(3).

11 Tryggestad and Lorentzen 2025 (Forthcoming).

12 Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2023) WPS Guidelines (2023-2030), page 5-6. https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/guidelines-for-the-norwegian-foreign-service-20232030/id3041371/?ch=1 Accessed: 02.05.2025.

Support to, and dialogue with, civil society and research institutes has been central to Norwegian support to WPS over time, and, in line with this approach, the 2023-2030 NAP also emphasizes cooperation, competence building and the exchange of information with civil society organizations and research institutes. This has contributed to the development of research environments, both in Norway and abroad, which support the NMFA in the implementation of the NAP as well as contributing to learning processes among and beyond the NMFA and its partners.[13]

Norway is considered a global leader in norm setting and normative adherence.[14] We find that as part of its diplomatic normative work Norway has spent considerable time and resources assuming leadership positions in various organizations and alliances established to promote the WPS agenda. Recent examples of this include Norway's work in connection with "The UN Global Compact", a global mechanism working on how to increase the pace of the implementation of the agenda. Together with the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, Norway was co-chair of the UN Global Compact from 2022 to 2025. In 2024 and 2025, in conjunction with Japan, Norway has taken on another important role as co-chair of the "WPS Focal Points Network" (FPN). The FPN network was launched in 2016 to help UN member states and regional organizations, in close cooperation with civil society groups, improve and strengthen the implementation of the WPS agenda.

Participants at the meeting of the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network in Oslo in May 2025.

Photo: Minstry of Foreign Affairs/Håvard Bjelland

13 Examples of this include the WPS Index/GIWPS, the PRIO GPS Centre, and NTLI (see also Section 4.4).

14 See also Norad (2022). Evaluation of Norwegian efforts for women, peace and security. NORAD rapport 3. https://www.norad.no/publikasjoner/2022/evaluation-of-norwegian-efforts-for-women-peace-and-security/ Accessed: 02.05.2025.

3.2 Peace processes and implementation of peace agreements

The thematic priority area of peace processes and implementation of peace agreements has two sub-themes: Peace and reconciliation processes, and implementation of peace agreements. Peace and reconciliation are key priorities in Norwegian foreign policy, and the inclusion of women in peace processes is seen as pivotal to achieving sustainable peace. It is stated in the 2023-2030 NAP that women's participation and direct influence are of singular importance in enhancing the credibility and legitimacy of peace agreements and ensuring a strong sense of ownership among the population (MFA 2023).

The Section for Peace and Reconciliation of the NMFA plays a central role in supporting and implementing this thematic priority and it has developed an overall WPS strategy with the aim of guiding its efforts in integrating WPS into dialogue initiatives and peace processes where Norway is engaged. Central to the strategy is the promotion of women's participation and rights in initial, explorative, and informal peace dialogues, in formal peace negotiations as well as in the implementation phase of peace agreements.[15] The WPS Action Plan 2023-2030 states that Norway will work to promote the inclusion of women in peace processes until women are consulted and a gender perspective is included in the peace agreements.

According to the Section for Peace and Reconciliation, in peace processes where Norway is directly involved as a facilitator or has a considerable involvement, each team should have a WPS plan where the objectives, steps that could be taken, and potential challenges and dilemmas that may arise, are specifically indicated. Although the content of each plan is dependent on Norway's role and the context of a given process, it usually entails efforts to conduct gender sensitive analyses and stakeholder analyses, exploring the possibilities of dialogue with relevant women's organizations and other civil society interlocutors, encouraging the warring parties to include women in their delegations, support for including gender perspectives in agenda setting, promoting female experts, ensuring gender balance in Norway's own delegations, providing support to stakeholders and events relevant to the implementation of the WPS agenda, and so forth.

In addition to the Section for Peace and Reconciliation and the Special Envoys[16] in this and other sections, the work in this thematic priority is carried out via the embassies in relevant countries and partner organizations. In many cases, Norway plays more of a supporting role and works through the UN, NGOs, and other partners. For example, Norway supports several international NGOs such as the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and the Berghof Foundation, who work with peace processes in several contexts. In some cases, the NMFA works operationally together with the NGO partners, while in other cases it offers support from a distance. According to the NMFA, the partners are asked to prioritize WPS support in their work, and to reflect upon and report on how they integrate WPS in their activities. Additionally, Norad makes a contribution of NOK 22 million per year in support to four international civil society organizations (INGOs)[17] and their partners working on WPS in conflict-affected contexts, including the priority countries or where Norway supports peace processes. The institutionalization of WPS in the NMFA's work on peace and reconciliation appears relatively advanced.

15 Internal document. WPS Strategy of the Section for Peace and Reconciliation, NMFA.

16 Special Envoys are based in various Sections of the NMFA.

17 These are International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN), the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the Berghof Foundation and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). See also section 6.2.

In addition to the WPS workplans, diplomats working on Peace and Reconciliation appear to have knowledge about the WPS agenda. According to interviewees, the Section's leadership also emphasizes WPS as a priority. In interviews and conversations with partners involved in peace processes where Norway plays a role, some noted however that they did not perceive that women's participation or gender perspectives were very high on the agenda. This reveals a potential point of contention when it comes to the promotion of the WPS agenda. Throughout the research, we noted that there are diverging opinions regarding the timing of when issues related to gender perspectives or women's involvement should be brought up. Many negotiators argue that there are certain phases when it is not productive to raise the topic of WPS or gender, especially if there is little or no ongoing dialogue and the main priority is to get the warring parties to the table. Interviewees in the NMFA however underlined that during those phases, there are many other ways that they can work to position women for participation in peace processes.[18]

3.3. Security Policy and Operations

Under the thematic priority of security policy and operations, we find the following sub-themes: The gender perspective and women's participation in the security sector; Conflict-related sexual violence; Radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism; and Women and climate, peace and security. In this section, we mainly highlight the NMFA's work on gender perspectives and women's participation in the security sector and conflict-related sexual violence. In the 2023-2030 NAP, Norway commits to integrating a gender perspective into its military, police and civilian operations and missions abroad with the aim of building peace and security for everyone. The NAP states that adopting a gender perspective at both national and international levels can be an important instrument for achieving this goal (MFA 2023: 14). This work entails strengthening the knowledge of the women, peace and security agenda among military, police and civilian personnel, incorporating a gender perspective into the planning, implementation, and evaluation phases of various efforts, and contributing to advancing the framework for WPS in international forums as well as to its implementation within the UN and NATO. Furthermore, Norway aims to contribute to international efforts towards enhancing the capacity building of WPS in the security sector (MFA 2023).

The NMFA also works along several tracks when it comes to implementing WPS and the NAP. One aspect of the work is the mainstreaming of WPS in discussions about security policy – for example by suggesting WPS as a theme to be addressed in security consultations and other discussions. In consultations about some country situations, this can be challenging, reflecting the fact that WPS may not be at the top of the list of priorities but that efforts are being made to integrate WPS where relevant.

A second aspect relates to contributions to UN peace operations. In terms of military and police contributions, Norway's largest contribution is currently with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), where Norway has also contributed a Specialized Police Team (SPT) working on combatting sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Previously, Norway has contributed SPTs to

18 For more on this, see J. Lorentzen et al. "Women's Participation and Influence in Peace Processes and Implementation of Peace Agreements in Colombia and South Sudan" (NUPI Report 2025, forthcoming).

combat SGBV in Haiti and Sudan.[19] Norway also deploys military and police to leadership positions in UN Peace Operations and works to promote women to these positions.[20]

Norway also supports civilian secondments to UN Peace Operations through the framework agreement with NORCAP/NORDEM where WPS is a prioritized area/theme. There is often a need for staff in WPS related positions such as Women Protection Advisers, Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV), and related capacity-building. Such positions are not always prioritized by the UN, and thus Norway can contribute to filling these positions through civilian secondments. So far Norway has funded four Women Protection Advisers and two positions on CRSV, which amounts to about half of the civilian secondments that the Section for Security Policy and Operations is responsible for, indicating that WPS is a prioritized theme in this area. In our interviews with NMFA staff as well as NORCAP secondments, the impression is that had Norway not funded these positions, they would have remained empty or understaffed, affecting the focus on these topics as well as the work that the peace operation in question would have been able to carry out in this regard (including monitoring and reporting on SGBV and CRSV). NORCAP secondments also expressed that they felt their work had a large impact on the work of the mission.

A third aspect relates to Norway's work in security organizations of which Norway is a member, in particular the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), where Norway works on various levels to integrate WPS into the work of the organization. One way that Norway promotes WPS in NATO is when representatives, including the Foreign Minister, prioritize WPS related events and discussions. A lot of this normative work on WPS in NATO is carried out by the NATO delegation in Brussels. As a member of the "Group of Friends of 1325", Norway plays an active role in promoting and pushing for the incorporation of WPS language in strategic documents, policies, and declarations. For instance, in the preparations for the Washington Summit Declaration of July 2024, Norway worked actively for NATO to integrate WPS into its three core tasks; deterrence and defence, crisis prevention, and management and cooperative security. The aim was to better operationalize and concretize language on WPS. Norway also contributed to the revised WPS Policy from 2024. While interviewees acknowledge that the achievements on concretizing and integrating more WPS language into NATO's key policy documents have taken time, they nonetheless consider this an area where Norway has significantly contributed to strengthening the language, including, as previously mentioned, across NATO's three core tasks.[21] It is however pertinent to note that the NATO annual report for 2024 (published in late April 2025) excluded all references to WPS, gender, and women[22] as a result of the Trump administration's assertive efforts to downplay language around gender, diversity and climate.[23] It is thus unclear whether this work will be sustained in NATO in the future in the face of the recent backlashes and to what extent it will be prioritized in the years to come. This, however, represents a unique opportunity for Norway to continue promoting the WPS agenda in an organization that is likely to be of seminal importance for Norwegian security policy in the years ahead.

19 See Marianne Tøraasen. 'The Future of UN Policing? The Norway-Led Specialized Police Team to Combat Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Haiti 2010–2019.' (Bergen: CMI, 2021). Additionally, a study of the SPTs in Haiti, Sudan and South Sudan by the same author is underway.

20 Major General Kristin Lund of Norway was the Force Commander of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) from 2014 to 2016. At the time she was the first woman to serve as UN Force Commander. Commissioner Christine Fossen from Norway currently leads the UN Police (UNPOL) component at UNMISS, appointed in 2021.

21 This work is under pressure at the time of writing. The 2024 NATO Annual Report, released on 24 April 2025, contains no references to gender, women or WPS. https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2025/4/pdf/sgar24-en.pdf

22 NATO (2025) The Secretary General's Annual Report. https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2025/4/pdf/sgar24-en.pdf Accessed: 20.05.2025

23 A. Roussi (2025) 'Revealed: NATO downplays climate and gender language to appease Trump'. *Politico*. 17 Apr. 2025. https://www.politico.eu/article/nato-downplays-climate-and-gender-language-to-appease-trump/. Accessed: 20.05.2025.

We also noted several examples of initiatives to promote WPS in NATO beyond diplomatic normative work. A small but tangible contribution by Norway in the context of WPS in NATO was a donation of military equipment to women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the summer of 2024. Ukraine issued a request to NATO for financial support for the procurement of uniforms, protection gear and so forth to female soldiers, which Norway funded through the NATO-CAP programme. This contribution was covered by the Ministry of Defence. Another example is a 1325-project between Jordan and NATO, wherein Norway was co-lead. The purpose of the project was to facilitate the increased participation of women in the Jordanian armed forces and entailed providing support to the creation of institutions such as kindergartens, childcare and health services that were deemed important and necessary for enabling Jordanian women to join the Armed Forces.

Interviewees nonetheless acknowledge that NATO is an organization where it can, at times, be challenging to work on WPS. Integrating WPS into the military part of the organization can be particularly arduous as some member states and representatives question the practical benefits and relevance WPS has for NATO operations. In fact, among the security organizations in which Norway plays a role, there is varying scope for promoting the WPS agenda. While NATO is a purely military-political organization, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is based on a comprehensive security concept that defines security within three dimensions: 1) political-military, 2) economic-environmental and 3) human security. The OSCE has become a partially paralyzed organization because of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Due to its consensus-based decision-making system, the organisation has not been able to adopt a budget since 2021, and Russia is constantly challenging the WPS agenda politically. On the other hand, the consensus-based system means that since gender equality and WPS have been adopted as cross-cutting themes, the OSCE is still an organization where, despite its currently weak capacity for action, there are opportunities to engage on WPS.

Given the situation, it is not possible to make concrete decisions, but Norway has been able to engage with and promote the WPS agenda in the OSCE in various ways. For example, Norway supports the OSCE's WIN[24] project with financial resources, which, among other areas, works on implementing courses in peace negotiations for women, network building, and assisting in the development and implementation of NAPs for several OSCE Participating States. WIN is an extra-budgetary project that does not fall under the regular OSCE budget, which has made it possible for Norway to support the OSCE's WPS efforts. Further, WPS has been useful for several OSCE countries from Central Asia and the former Soviet States to establish contact and gain closer cooperation with other Participating States in light of the changed geopolitical situation. Several countries that have not traditionally shown a great interest in WPS and gender equality have requested assistance from the OSCE on developing or updating WPS NAPs. This has been supported by Norway, for example through a workshop for Central Asian countries on NAP development in 2024.
Whether the growing interest from these countries in the WPS agenda is genuine or not is difficult to assess. Some diplomats interpret it as an attempt by them to partially distance themselves from Russia given the international political situation, and indicative of a wish to build closer relations with European member states.

24 The WIN project seeks to advance gender equality as a prerequisite for achieving and maintaining stable, prosperous and peaceful societies in the OSCE area. https://www.osce.org/winproject

We find that Norwegian support to WPS takes many shapes and forms and is disbursed and administered by several entities and mechanisms. This is very clear from the research behind this report, and the priority area of Security policy and operations illustrates this well. In addition to funding to and through civil society organizations and the UN system, experts are deployed through NORCAP and other mechanisms. Much of Norway's diplomatic work in security organizations such as NATO and the OSCE is difficult to measure in financial contributions.

The work with WPS within the Security Policy and Operations priority area appears slightly more fragmented, and perhaps somewhat less integrated across the entire scope of the NMFA's work than is the case for peace processes and peace agreements. This may, however, at least partially be a result of the fact that much of the focus is on peace and security operations, the support to which is largely organized through secondments and specific contributions. Further, and as mentioned, the work described in this section shows the complexity and breadth of Norwegian support to WPS, which is disbursed though aid, framework agreements, and deployments. This is in addition to the diplomatic normative and institutional work to promote WPS, both within the NMFA itself and also in the institutional contexts where Norway has an engagement.

3.4. Humanitarian efforts, protection of civilians and protection of human rights

Under the thematic priority of humanitarian efforts, protection of civilians and protection of human rights, we find the following sub-themes: A gender perspective in the humanitarian response; The gender perspective and protection of the population in Norway; Women and conflict: protection and asylum policy; and Women human rights defenders. In this report we focus mainly on the NMFA's work to promote a gender perspective in the humanitarian response. The 2023-2030 NAP states that unless a gender perspective is integrated into this work it will not be possible to achieve the goal of providing effective humanitarian assistance (MFA 2023: 27).

Norwegian support in this thematic priority is focused on financing and advocacy. Financially, among major recipients we find the Nansen programme for Ukraine, UN agencies such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), large humanitarian organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and Norwegian civil society organizations such as Norwegian Church Aid, Norwegian People's Aid, the Norwegian Refugee Council, and Caritas. Norway has also been one of the major partners of the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) since its inception in 2016. The WPHF is a global funding mechanism that prioritizes supporting grassroots women's civil society organizations (CSOs) and women human rights defenders working in conflict and humanitarian settings.[25] Norway has been among the key supporters of the WPHF since 2018, and this support takes the form of financial contributions of over USD 14.7 million USD to date as well as serving on the WPHF Funding Board. According to the NMFA, one way that it works on implementing the WPS agenda and the NAP is by demanding that all partners include a gender perspective in the design, planning, and implementation of humanitarian response, as well as incorporating a gender perspective in their reporting.[26] WPS and gender is furthermore a central theme when Norway undertakes humanitarian

25 See https://wphfund.org/.
26 The responsibility for management of funds belonging to the humanitarian portfolio was transferred from the MFA to Norad in August 2024.

diplomacy. The NMFA defines humanitarian diplomacy as "advocacy work to safeguard people's rights, dignity and needs in humanitarian crises and to promote the protection of civilians in armed conflict".[27] To achieve this, Norway aims to support actors who can contribute to these efforts, and Norway is also willing to engage in dialogue with all parties (including armed groups and de facto governments). For instance, Norway has been in dialogue with the Taliban in Afghanistan. For more information on this, see section 5.3.

Norway also invests in global advocacy and has for many years closely collaborated with the office of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (CRSV). At the 15-year celebration of the CRSV mandate of this office in 2024, a Norwegian representative was among the keynote speakers and Norway was co-sponsor of the event. Another example of advocacy and global leadership is that Norway recently assumed the leadership for the "Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies"[28] for 2025 and 2026. This is a multi-stakeholder initiative launched in 2013 to drive change and foster accountability so that every humanitarian effort includes policies, systems, and mechanisms to mitigate gender-based violence risks and to support survivors.

When it comes to humanitarian assistance, sexual and gender-based violence is a prioritized issue for Norway in its humanitarian efforts, and the NMFA underlines that this is part of its humanitarian strategy and would have been a key priority regardless of the WPS NAP. This overlap in policy was considered beneficial, however, and some real and artificial boundaries were highlighted. In the humanitarian response, Norway's humanitarian partners do not necessarily differentiate between SGBV that is conflict-related, and other types of SGBV, considering that the needs of the survivors are equally important irrespective of whether the perpetrator can be identified as belonging to an armed group or not. In the WPS agenda, however, CRSV has a particular status owing to the implications of the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war, and several UNSC resolutions on CRSV exist. According to interviewees, Norway is aware of the distinction between SGBV and CRSV and often highlights this. At the same time, they respect that humanitarian actors provide assistance regardless of whether the beneficiary is a SGBV or CRSV survivor. In extension, some challenges related to the perceived hierarchy of victims and practical problems related to identification of perpetrators and thus to reporting, were noted. This is however an ongoing debate between humanitarian partners and CRSV actors in places where Norway is also engaged.

Humanitarian assistance is a major priority for Norway. The centrality of humanitarian efforts to Norwegian Foreign Policy is also illustrated by the fact that the amount of aid funding that can be identified for this theme is many times higher than for the two other thematic priorities.[29] Also in this thematic priority, Norway supports the WPS agenda through diplomatic normative work in institutional contexts (such as the UN's work on CRSV), and through efforts to incentivize partners to integrate gender perspectives into their practices. The research also provided many examples of gender sensitive measures in humanitarian diplomacy (see Sections 4 and 5). For example, Norway promotes the WPS agenda in its humanitarian diplomacy and support to organizations

27 Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2024) Strategi for norsk humanitær politikk 2024-2029. https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/7257c8ae2e1f47e9a44c93844b6a8864/no/pdfs/strategi-for-norsk-humanitaer-politikk.pdf Accessed: 08.05.2025

28 https://www.calltoactiongbv.com/

29 5343 million NOK in 2023, compared to 424 million NOK (peace and reconciliation) and 145 million NOK (security policy and disarmament). Source: Norad.

working in humanitarian contexts in the priority countries, such as when promoting gender sensitive humanitarian assistance in coordination forums in Palestine, or supporting assistance by women for women in Afghanistan. Based on this we find that there is a good level of awareness regarding the WPS agenda and gender perspectives in the humanitarian field.

3.5. Key Findings

- As part of its diplomatic normative work, Norway takes on leadership positions in networks and initiatives established to promote the WPS agenda (e.g. the UN Global Compact and WPS Focal Points Network).
- The WPS work under the thematic priority of peace and reconciliation appears relatively advanced. For example, the Section for Peace and Reconciliation has an overall WPS strategy and each process where Norway is directly involved as a facilitator or supports in a considerable way should have its own WPS plan.
- Targeted work to support and position women for participation in peace processes is carried out by Special Envoys, facilitation teams, partner organizations and/or embassies.
- While the WPS work under the priority area of Security policy and operations appears slightly more fragmented, we observe significant efforts and progress across a range of activities and contexts.
- Norway promotes female leadership in deployments and several Norwegian military, police and civilian secondments to UN missions have had a significant WPS focus.
- Norway has played an important role in promoting WPS in NATO in recent years. However, the WPS agenda is currently under pressure in NATO due to resistance from the US.
- The area of Humanitarian efforts, protection of civilians and protection of human rights is the largest of the priority themes in terms of funding.
- In its humanitarian efforts, Norway works to prevent sexual and gender-based violence, integrate a gender perspective in its diplomacy, and support women's organizations working in humanitarian contexts.
- Overall, the gender perspective appears well integrated into humanitarian response and humanitarian diplomacy.

4. Norwegian support to WPS in the priority countries

In this section we provide an overview of Norway's work on WPS in the priority countries. Norwegian support is broad and varied, and rather than a systematic overview by country, we provide examples that represent best practices or typical examples of Norwegian support in the priority countries. We highlight the different forms the Norwegian support takes, demonstrating the ways that Norway promotes the agenda through direct and indirect financial support, as well as how the foreign service uses non-monetary resources in addition to financial assistance to promote the agenda in these contexts.

4.1. Support to and through the UN system

In the priority countries, a large proportion of the financial support is channelled through the UN system. This includes support to and via UN agencies, funds, missions (including peacekeeping missions) and country offices. Additionally, when NORCAP and NORDEM seconds personnel to the priority countries, this is often to the UN (but also to, e.g., the African Union) Below, we provide some examples of the forms this support takes.

An example of a country where most of Norwegian financial support on WPS is channelled through the UN is Yemen. For instance, Norway has financed two experts through the UN who have assisted the internationally recognized government in Aden and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs with the implementation of Yemen's NAP. Additionally, Norway has financed a gender expert at the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (OSESGY) who is providing support to the Yemeni peace process. Norway allocated NOK 4 million to the gender unit within UN Special Envoy Office in 2023 and 2024. Moreover, Norway provided NOK 18.9 million in funding for the years 2023 and 2024 to the UN Peace Support Facility (UN PSF) that supports the objectives of the OSESGY and the UN Residence Coordinator's Office to Yemen. As part of its broader peace work, the UN PSF promotes women's participation and inclusivity in the peace process through capacity building on gender mainstreaming and empowerment.

Interviewees noted that since Norway does not have a permanent representation in Yemen and the security situation in the country is critical, visits from Norwegian diplomats have been limited. When possible, visits undertaken by both Norwegian politicians and diplomats have entailed meeting the UN experts in addition to a group of Yemeni women who have supported the work of Yemen's 1325 NAP through, for instance, a mapping of the room for manoeuvre for various WPS efforts. This women's group has, according to interviewees, been involved in the mapping of the security needs of women in Aden and contributed to the establishment of a women's police force in the city, among other things. Through NORDEM/NORCAP, Norway also financed the secondment of a WPS expert with NOK 13.8 million between 2021-2024 to support the Yemeni Government's implementation of the NAP.

However, some respondents relate that channelling support through the UN and financing UN experts is an expensive endeavour, and this approach can be a costly process.

UN Women has proven to be a key partner when it comes to supporting the WPS agenda in country contexts. In several countries, such as Nigeria and Ukraine, much of the Norwegian support to WPS efforts in recent years has been channelled through UN Women. Norwegian support to UN Women can be earmarked or project-based, but Norway also often provides non-earmarked support, meaning more flexible core funding following the priorities identified in the strategic note of the specific UN Women country office. In South Sudan for example, the embassy works with UN Women on topics related to women's participation in decision-making processes, and with UNFPA on protection issues. The embassy does not work directly with the local networks or national coalitions of South Sudanese women, but supports these by working with and through UN Women. Funding from the Section for Peace and Reconciliation in the NMFA has also been channelled to organizations working on women's capacity building for the negotiating and monitoring of implementation in South Sudan.

Between 2021-2024, Norway allocated NOK 46 million to UN Women Ukraine. Since the war started in 2022, civil society organizations initially working on issues concerning women's participation and equality have shifted focus to meet the great humanitarian needs. In response, UN Women has initiated a project that not only addresses the urgent humanitarian needs but also emphasizes some of the long-term goals of the WPS agenda. For example, with support from Norway, UN Women organized a training course on political participation for Ukrainian women and LGBTQI individuals from across the country, aiming to prepare them for the day when political elections can take place. UN Women has also launched various campaigns aimed at increasing women's participation in the workforce, particularly in essential public and societal roles.

We found that there is some variation in how effective the support to UN Women is perceived to be. This seems to depend on the strength and competence of the UN Women country team in question. In some cases, such as in Ukraine and Colombia, they were deemed very capable while in other cases less so. We also noted at least one case where the collaboration with UN Women had been terminated due to financial mismanagement. While providing support through the UN system can be considered a more efficient way of administering support, as well as coordinating and pooling resources towards a trusted actor, there are also challenges related to relying on the UN system.

Another challenge when it comes to distributing funding through the UN relates to the UN's ability to reach local organizations. This is often brought up by local women's organizations and human rights defenders who argue that the system prioritizes international, or internationally linked, NGOs. For example, since the outbreak of violence in the DRC in January 2025, women's organizations have become frontline actors in the humanitarian response. Some of these local organizations have had to rely on funding from Congolese businesswomen in the absence of international funding. This shows the need to identify innovative structures for funding and support local women human rights defenders and peacebuilders, such as the Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF).

4.2. Support to and through international, Norwegian, and local civil society organizations

Norway supports international, Norwegian, and local civil society organizations that work in the priority countries. As described in Section 3, Norway has agreements in place with large international organizations that work in the priority countries and channels funding to local organizations through these.

Norway supports four international NGOs that are key partners on WPS: The Civil Society Action Network (ICAN), the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD), the Berghof Foundation and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). According to the NMFA, these organizations have been chosen due to their contributions in international policy debates and development as well as their work on the ground. For example, ICAN spearheads the Women's Alliance for Security Leadership (WASL) comprising over 90 independent, locally rooted women-led peacebuilding organizations and practitioners across over 40 countries affected by conflict, violent extremism, and constricting political space. As such, the organization connects with and collects lessons and experiences from women in a large number of contexts affected by conflict and crisis. Another example is the Berghof Foundation which contributes to advancing the WPS agenda by contributing a deeper understanding of the structural roots of gender inequality in peacebuilding. Additionally, the foundation works with liberation movement and supports female ex-combatants, promoting their involvement and leadership in post-conflict transitions.[30]

Norwegian NGOs and civil society organizations also receive funding for WPS work in the priority countries. Examples of Norwegian NGOs that work in the priority countries include (but are not limited to) Norwegian Church Aid, Norwegian People's Aid, Caritas, the Norwegian Refugee Council, CARE, and others. For many of the Norwegian NGOs that work in the priority countries, WPS is one of the areas they work in, and they often do so through a combination of projects and programmes that target WPS specifically and by integrating a gender perspective across their projects and operations. Other organizations work mainly in the WPS field. The Forum for Women and Development (FOKUS) is an NGO that works to strengthen women's rights and opportunities through programme work in seven countries in Africa and Latin America, as well as through political advocacy in Norway and internationally. FOKUS currently has a regional office in Colombia, where one of the main thrusts of their work is on WPS and women's participation in peacebuilding and reconciliation.

The support, described above, provided to international and Norwegian organizations also contributes to strengthening local organizations when it is channelled through international and Norwegian organizations that collaborate with local partners. For example, in South Sudan, Norwegian People's Aid have programmes on humanitarian, resilience, and civil society support that work with local organizations across the country. In 2024 their civil society programme supported 24 civil society organizations working in different parts of South Sudan focusing on women's rights, youth rights, media rights, and resource rights, and the programme has, over time, assisted the participation of civil society and women's groups in the peace process, including through support for coalition building. Norwegian support thereby extends to local partner organizations and communities in areas where international organizations are not present. As described in Section 5 of this report, this is also often the way Norway channels support in contexts where access is difficult.

30 See https://berghof-foundation.org/themes/gender

Through the support described here, Norway has an extensive network and reach among international, national, and local organizations. In many cases, Norway works closely with these organizations. However, from interviews and conversations carried out in connection with this research, we find that efforts to use these networks and capitalize on the knowledge from the field can be strengthened still further. We therefore recommend that Norway should make even more use of experiences and knowledge generated through its extensive and wide-reaching support to inform its work locally and its normative work at the global level. In other words, these investments can also be utilized when Norwegian representatives sit on the boards of institutions and structures such as UN Women or the WPHF.

4.3. Creating spaces and platforms for engagement

Norwegian support for the WPS agenda in the priority countries goes beyond financial contributions. Central to Norway's efforts to promote the normative framework of the agenda is engaging in diplomatic and political dialogues as well as facilitating platforms for women peacebuilders, negotiators, and actors. Additionally, Norway has arranged workshops in various priority countries focusing on different aspects of the agenda. According to interviewees, in cases where there is less room to take on a leading role on WPS issues, Norway demonstrates its engagement and support to the agenda through participation in WPS-related events hosted by other actors (see example from Yemen in Section 4.1).

Another form of engagement identified is the facilitation of platforms for women actors which takes place in many contexts. For example, before closing down in 2023, the Norwegian embassy in Mali hosted meetings in their premises with the aim of creating a platform for various actors to discuss women's participation in the peace process. In South Sudan, interviewees noted that informal meetings at the Norwegian Embassy became important meeting places for women representatives to meet and discuss their engagement with the peace process. They point out that using the embassy as a meeting place has been a way to support these women actors to influence the peace process. However, we observe that this important aspect of the diplomatic and normative work becomes difficult in cases where Norway does not have an embassy or is forced to relocate its embassy (see Section 5.3).

Norway also offers support to women's platforms and forums in connection with several current peace processes. For example, Norway supports ongoing negotiations in Sudan, including support to the Sudanese Coordination of Civil Democratic Forces (Taqaddum) and local organizations promoting the role of women in negotiations, capacity-building on security issues, ceasefire efforts, and humanitarian access. In 2024, Norway contributed to bringing together in Geneva a group of women actors from Sudan with the aim of directly inputting and conveying their experience and perspectives to the negotiations in Sudan.

Norway also brings together and facilitates the interaction between local and international actors working on WPS. For example, Norway is often active in so-called "friend groups" for WPS. These are meeting places where like-minded countries come together and keep each other updated on their WPS work, as well as making plans and strategies for further efforts. In Mali and South Sudan, Norway was among the initiators of these groups.

During Norway's tenure as co-chair for the Friends of 1325-group in South Sudan, one of the modalities of work was to put out press statements when there were reports of violence and/or atrocities against women, and to encourage the government to live up to its commitments regarding the 35 per cent gender quota in government positions. NMFA diplomats also noted that Norway has facilitated platforms for the women's network, the UN, and donors in South Sudan with the aim of enhancing coordination and collaboration and mobilizing funding for women actors.

In South Africa, interviewees note that Norway has hosted informal dinners to facilitate information exchange and discussions among the main actors working on WPS. For example, when ISS or ACCORD are gathering central WPS actors, Norway, at times, facilitates for them to meet informally with the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) and the NMFA.

Norway furthermore advocates and raises awareness for the WPS agenda in various forums and settings. For example, a key aspect of promoting the thematic priority area of the Norwegian 1325 NAP related to humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan, has, according to interviewees, been to advocate for women's role in humanitarian work, and – in dialogue with the Taliban – to stress the importance of allowing women to deliver humanitarian assistance to other women. The aim has been to ensure that Norwegian humanitarian assistance does not play a part in weakening the position of women, but rather promotes their roles. This has proved to be possible to some degree, as in the last couple of years Norwegian NGOs have been able to deliver assistance by women for women in some parts of the country. This type of humanitarian diplomacy is not unique to Afghanistan, but something Norway does in many contexts, including Palestine, where Norway actively promotes gender-sensitive humanitarian assistance through its participation in humanitarian coordination forums.

4.4. Political dialogue with authorities and support to policy development

Norway engages in dialogue on WPS with authorities in the priority countries, and one important aspect of this relates to the development and implementation of WPS NAPs which Norway supports in many of the priority countries such as Colombia, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Sudan, and Sudan. This support is both financial and diplomatic. In many of these countries, Norway has engaged in dialogue with authorities and government entities to provide knowledge and expertise and raise awareness of the different aspects of the agenda.

In Nigeria, Norway supported a project focusing on the development of a third National Action Plan on WPS that was due to be launched in 2025. The support has entailed funding and backstopping in the development of the plan, participating in and financing events relevant to the plan, and remaining engaged on the topic. In addition to the NAP, two sub-national states have also launched State Action Plans through the same UN project. Norway has also been a key supporter of the development of Colombia's first 1325 NAP which was launched in November 2024.[31]

At the initiative of Mozambique, Norway and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare in Mozambique signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in 2018, with the aim of strengthening

31 See also J. Lorentzen 2025. "What can a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security do for Colombia?" NUPI Policy Brief, 6/2025.

the political dialogue on gender issues and ensuring Mozambican ownership of their NAP. The strategic partnership between Mozambique and Norway was likely a result of Norway's reputation as a big WPS actor based on many years of effort to promote WPS and Resolution 1325 globally. Moreover, Norway's resources, flexibility, and capacity for partnerships may have put the country in a favourable position for the strategic partnership.

Norway has further been a longstanding supporter of the AU Office of the Special Envoy on WPS. This support takes multiple forms, including earmarking funding for the Special Envoy's office, support to the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa), support for capacity building and staffing of the FemWise Secretariat, as well as secondments of experts to peace-processes across Africa through NORCAP. Through Training for Peace (TfP), Norway's 28-year long flagship support programme that funds the African Union Commission and its partners' peace and security capacity, Norway has also supported the development of various AU WPS-related policies and training courses on WPS.[32]

4.5. Key Findings

- Norwegian support to WPS in the priority countries can be categorized into Support to and through the UN system; Support to and through international, Norwegian, and local civil society organizations; Support to creating spaces and platforms for engagement; and Political dialogue with authorities and support to policy development.
- The efficacy of channelling through the UN system varies depending on context and the strength and competence of the country team in question, as well as on the ability of the UN system to reach local organizations working on the frontlines.
- In many cases, Norwegian support to local organizations is channelled through international and Norwegian civil society organizations.
- Beyond financial contributions, a major part of Norway's efforts to promote the normative framework of the WPS agenda involves engaging in political and diplomatic dialogue, facilitating platforms, arranging workshops and advocating, and raising awareness of the agenda in various platforms and forums.
- In several priority countries, using the Norwegian embassy as a meeting place has been a diplomatic tool for supporting women's actors in influencing peace processes.
- In many of the priority countries, Norway engages in dialogue on WPS with the authorities. An important aspect of this work includes support for the development and implementation of 1325 NAPs.

32 See for example ACCORD (2024). https://www.accord.org.za/news/regional-seminar-on-women-peace-and-security-women-peacekeepers-and-the-future-of-peacekeeping/. Accessed: 20.05.2025

5. Challenges to implementing the WPS agenda in the priority countries

Norway's work on WPS in the priority countries is strongly affected by challenges such as increases in violent conflict and changes to the political context, including growing antifeminism and autocratic developments. Below we discuss how the foreign service adapts and responds to these challenges.

5.1. Increase in conflict

Sudden changes or escalating political or security situations in the countries where Norway operates sometimes require Norwegian support to be adjusted accordingly. An example of a priority country that has been affected by increased levels of conflict in recent years is Sudan, where serious conflict and lack of access from 2020 has narrowed the space for implementing the Sudanese 1325 NAP. Seeing that further Norwegian cooperation with Sudanese authorities is limited due to the ongoing conflict that erupted in 2023, Norway is no longer in the same position to follow up and support the implementation of the Sudanese NAP. It is, however, considered to be in Norway's interest to continue the work on WPS and to ensure that local ownership of the implementation process of the Sudanese NAP continues once a ceasefire is in place and a civilian-led government takes office. In order to adapt to the ongoing situation, the embassy has considered several measures, including a mapping exercise to gain a clearer understanding of the landscape of actors and available entry points.

The intensity of conflict and limited operational space in Sudan require international and local organizations, as well as donors such as Norway, to adopt a flexible approach and implement activities wherever conditions allow. This means that it is not always possible to operate where the needs are greatest but rather where conditions permit. An example of this is a UNFPA initiative, supported by Norway among others, which, in the light of the conflict, aims to strengthen the capacity of the remaining response system for sexual and reproductive health so that it is better equipped to support survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

A shifting approach to more needs-based and opportunity-driven support is also the case in Palestine. The war between Israel- Gaza war and the restricted access for humanitarian assistance due to Israel's blockade of aid has forced international, regional, and local actors to prioritize the most acute humanitarian needs. To adapt to the situation, Norway has attempted to promote the leadership and role of Palestinian women and women-led organizations in humanitarian assistance and peace efforts. In practice, this entails that organizations primarily recognized as civil society actors working with women's rights may receive some targeted support to contribute to service delivery and humanitarian assistance, addressing acute needs that are primarily relevant for women, such as the provision of dignity kits. A prime purpose is to enable these organizations to meet the immediate needs of their target populations and thereby remain relevant actors within their local

communities once the critical phase of the conflict has subsided. Through its support to UN Women, Norway also contributes to ensuring that women's specific needs are highlighted and addressed across the various UN agencies operating on the ground. Similarly, issues concerning women and their participation in Ukraine have been impacted by the growing and humanitarian needs resulting from the war.

In many contexts affected by conflict, local organizations and human rights defenders become frontline actors. Several of these report challenges in accessing international funding, saying that most of the funding goes through the UN and large NGOs.[33] Small CSOs, especially those operating in states with weak bureaucracies, may struggle to fulfil the criteria needed to become partners within the UN system. To meet the needs of these actors and organizations, Norway should continue to support learning from and improvement of innovative mechanisms such as the WPHF in order to make funding more available to women's organizations and human rights defenders working on the frontlines in conflict areas and humanitarian settings.

5.2. Political context

In priority countries where Norway does not recognize the de facto authorities, there is no formal cooperation and Norway must rely on alternative modes of engagement to support WPS initiatives and efforts. For example, although Norway maintains an embassy in Myanmar, it does not recognize the military regime that came to power following the 2021 coup.

The political situation in Myanmar significantly hinders efforts to advance the WPS agenda. Numerous local women and civil society actors are now forced to operate in secrecy to avoid reprisals, and many women-led and pro-democracy organizations and human rights defenders have been forced to flee the country. Donors must exercise great caution in their engagements with local actors working on these issues. Seeing that women rights organizations must operate in secrecy and avoid organizational registration (and thus cannot have open bank accounts), Norway has had to adapt and be more flexible in the way it channels funds to them. This, combined with the sanctions that are imposed on the country, poses some practical challenges. Furthermore, these organizations' limited operational space also affects the ability to openly report on results even though there are visible results on the ground, which can be challenging when agitating for support and funding. The volatile security situation further affects the Norwegian embassy's ability to engage directly with its local partners, which suggests that trust in them is essential. Many of these organizations however have been in partnership with Norway for a long time, and it is therefore deemed important to continue to support them despite the lack of direct engagement.

In many contexts where we have seen changes in the political situation, Norway continues to support various local WPS partners with whom it has cooperated for a long time. This is deemed important for remaining a trusted partner, to keeping these organizations and their work alive, as well as to contributing to building their resilience until a ceasefire and a peace process is in place. This is the case in Myanmar as well as in Afghanistan. Although it has become very difficult to advance the WPS agenda in Afghanistan, Norway continues to engage with and politically support local civil society and women-led organizations.

33 Participant observation, FPN Thematic Meeting, Oslo, May 2025.

In some contexts, there are projects where WPS is not a defined target because it is very sensitive. SGBV and related topics are sensitive in some contexts, and interviewees noted that partners report that they must adapt their language and approach to the context in which they work. One example of this is Yemen, where this is particularly challenging in Houthi controlled parts of the country. Consequently, the focus in these areas is mainly on family planning. Also, in Afghanistan since the Taliban's takeover in 2021, working on issues related to WPS and women's rights have become increasingly difficult as the rights of women have significantly declined under Taliban rule which is currently considered the most discriminatory in the world.[34] In Mali, some actors reported that it became more difficult to work explicitly on the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRSHR) and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) prevention and response during the period following the military coups in 2020 and 2021, and it was observed that some events which had previously been held annually no longer took place.

Even in priority countries where Norway formally collaborates with local authorities, advancing and promoting the agenda can prove difficult and the agenda's receptiveness can also depend on which politicians are in power. Having counterparts in key ministries that are interested in cooperating with Norway and other donors on WPS is key. There are examples from priority countries where when this collaborative relationship with important ministries, such as the Ministry of Women's Affairs, does not exist, progress stalls.

Despite Norway's intention to remain a consistent and trusted partner, ensuring continuity can be a challenge. Before the military coups in 2020 and 2021 in Mali, and the closing of the Norwegian embassy there in 2023, Norway supported various projects and initiatives through the UN peacekeeping force MINUSMA and international organizations such as UN Women, but also through cooperation with Malian authorities. For example, the Embassy supported a three-year project to empower women as a driver for sustainable development and lasting peace in which a government institution was a key partner.[35] However, Norway, in common with other partners, found that opportunities to engage with the authorities at a higher level became limited after the junta came to power. This also meant fewer opportunities to raise WPS-related issues with officials in key positions.

We find that Norway's type of presence in the priority countries affects its ability to operate and support WPS. In the priority countries where Norway is not represented by a permanent mission, Norway's WPS efforts are often rather limited and sometimes more reliant on the international actors operating in the country in question.[36]

It is, however, somewhat different in some of the countries in which Norway has had a presence over time but for various reasons has had to close the embassy or temporarily move it. In such contexts, Norway has usually already established a network that it can continue to engage with and support. For example, the long Norwegian engagement and involvement in the peace process in Sudan – in addition to the longstanding presence of Norwegian NGOs in the country – has allowed

34 G. Smith (2024) Afghanistan Three Years after the Taliban Takeover. *International Crisis Group*. https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/afghanistan-three-years-after-taliban-takeover

35 The project ended in 2024.

36 In many of the WPS priority countries, Norway has an embassy or a representation office, but there are some exceptions. Owing to the outbreak of conflict in Afghanistan (2021) and Sudan (2023), as well as the deteriorating security situation in Mali (2023), Norway has closed or temporarily moved its embassies in these countries. Furthermore, the arguably weakened diplomatic relations between Norway and Israel (2024), has forced Norway to temporarily close its representation office in Al Ram in Palestine. In the case of Venezuela, Iraq and Yemen, Norwegian efforts and diplomatic ties are coordinated from Colombia, Jordan and Saudi Arabia respectively.

Norway to build an extensive network of partners. Another example is Afghanistan, which has been an important country for Norwegian engagement for peace and stability over the past two decades. Here, Norway continues to engage with its network of civil society actors, including women-led organizations, despite the shrinking civic space and the relocation of the embassy. Drawing on its established networks, Norway can continue to build on and support these networks despite not being present in the country. This does not imply that this mode of engagement comes without challenges, as conflict and a volatile security situation also affect local actors' ability to operate. However, it arguably allows Norway to be more flexible in its approach to WPS compared to other countries where it does not have a similar history and network.

5.3. Key Findings

- In response to the outbreak of violent conflict, in many cases Norway adopts a flexible approach to implement activities wherever conditions allow.
- In some cases, changes in country contexts have prompted Norway to shift from providing direct support to national authorities and civil society organizations towards channelling support indirectly through Norwegian and/or international organizations.
- In many contexts where we have seen changes in the political situation, Norway continues to support various local WPS partners with whom it has cooperated for a long time.
- The impact of Norwegian or Norway-supported WPS efforts is often dependent on the political context in which Norway and its partners operate in.
- In some contexts, there are projects where WPS/gender is not a defined target because it is very sensitive.
- In the priority countries where Norway is not represented by a permanent mission, Norway's WPS efforts are often more limited and sometimes more reliant on the international actors operating in the country in question.
- In countries where Norway has had a presence over time, it is often able to draw on existing networks for continued engagement and support.

6. Results and effects

6.1. Institutionalization and mainstreaming

Several of the interviewees pointed to a high awareness about the WPS agenda among Norwegian diplomats – especially after Norway's tenure in the UNSC in 2021 and 2022 where WPS served as one of the priority areas. This is also in line with former evaluations that have found that Norwegian NAPs have succeeded in mobilizing the efforts of the Norwegian government on WPS and that the NAPs have raised awareness and competence as well as solidifying the understanding of WPS and commitments to it.[37]

Our assessment concurs with this. Overall, we find that knowledge is high. The understanding that WPS forms an integral part of Norwegian foreign policy is widespread in the foreign service. This is particularly salient in areas such as peace processes and implementation of peace agreements, and humanitarian response. In some areas such as women and climate, peace and security, the work appears less advanced. However, this area was integrated into the NAP relatively recently.[38]

As discussed in more detail in section 6.2, there is some variation in how much time and effort is put into promoting the WPS agenda or related work in different parts of the system. We also find that the tools, working methods, and resources available for the implementation of the agenda varies – between thematic priority areas as well as between priority countries. With regards to institutionalization, our assessment is that this is an ongoing process that is relatively advanced in some areas and less so in others.

Within the NMFA, the Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security is responsible for coordinating efforts internally and vis-à-vis the other relevant ministries and thus plays a key role in the institutionalization of the WPS agenda. According to interviewees, the title "Special Envoy" provides additional visibility and sends an important signal in international diplomacy about the status Norway attaches to this work. The Special Envoy has overall responsibility for policy development and the implementation of the NAP and plays an important role in directly following up the NMFA's embassies and missions in the WPS focus countries. For example, WPS meetings are arranged for focal points and employees covering WPS at the embassies twice a year.

These internal efforts are important steps in the institutionalization of the WPS effort in the Foreign Service. For example, during the internal WPS meeting with the focal points in 2024, the embassies were encouraged to develop more concrete strategies for their WPS efforts. After this meeting, several embassies aimed to concretize and revise their WPS approach. An important challenge regarding institutionalization and mainstreaming is the turnover and rotation of staff within the foreign service (see also Section 6.2).

37 Norad (2022). Evaluation of Norwegian efforts for women, peace and security. NORAD rapport 3. https://www.norad.no/publikasjoner/2022/evaluation-of-norwegian-efforts-for-women-peace-and-security/ Accessed: 02.05.2025.

38 This sub-theme is shared with the Ministry of Climate and the Environment which is working on developing a strategy for how it will approach its WPS work.

Making sure that knowledge is passed on through systems for knowledge-sharing is thus important. Having regular meetings with staff covering WPS contributes to filling gaps when it comes to handover and peer-to-peer learning. We therefore recommend that this practice is continued in the future. Additionally, Norway should continue to draw on the external FPN network for the sharing of experiences and lessons beyond its own organization. Regarding engagement with the priority countries, the WPS FPN gathers a large group of focal points from governments and international organizations. Yet interviewees observed that there is potential to engage countries from the Global South even more in this network.

In the 2023-2030 NAP, greater emphasis has been placed on the Special Envoy's coordinating function. The work on institutionalization is also continued and strengthened by assigning the responsibility for operationalization and goal achievement to the involved ministries through creating their own follow-up plans.[39] According to interviewees, the coordinating role of the Special Envoy is about collaborating with colleagues in other ministries to achieve common goals rather than giving instructions, and it is the ministries who are accountable in the NAP that have the constitutional responsibility for the implementation of the WPS in their respective fields. This way of working is very much in line with the Norwegian approach to WPS in its foreign policy, where the focus has been on broad support and institutionalization within the NMFA over time.[40] This differs somewhat from the approach chosen by several other countries who have adopted a Feminist foreign policy, which could be understood as a more 'aggressive' move to spotlight the agenda and to forge an international image of themselves as champions of WPS. Whether the Norwegian approach of broad support is fit for the future, or if a shift towards a more targeted approach is warranted, is a strategic question that should be the subject of discussions in the NMFA going forward.

Norway is already perceived as an international champion on WPS. In light of the global backlash against the agenda, we recommend, however, that the MFA considers how to raise the profile of the WPS agenda even higher. This report shows that many important tools, frameworks, policies, and practices have been established, but that this work is somewhat uneven and requires continued effort. Efforts to promote and institutionalize the WPS agenda in the Foreign Service risk gradual erosion if the focus on WPS as a priority area of Norwegian foreign policy is not maintained. Faced with geopolitical changes, other issues may take priority. In this situation, maintaining WPS as a priority must be a strategic decision. Maintaining a high profile internationally is part of this work but buy-in must also be sought from the Foreign Service as a whole.

39 The involved ministries are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Justice and Public Security, Ministry of Culture and Equality, Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, Ministry of Climate and Environment.

40 Tryggestad and Lorentzen (2025).

6.2. The list of priority countries

According to the 2023-2030 NAP, Norway's efforts in third countries are focused on selected priority countries where Norway has a presence or plays a special role that makes effective engagement possible. The NAP further states that the list of priority countries is dynamic and can be adjusted as conditions change.[41] According to the NMFA, priority countries are suggested in consultation with civil society and the political leadership. The list is not final and new countries have been added to the list over time. Interviewees stated that Norway works with WPS in all contexts where there is vulnerability.

Some of the priority countries are contexts where Norway actively supports ongoing peace processes or the implementation of peace agreements, such as Colombia, the Philippines, South Sudan, and Venezuela. Other contexts constitute more strategic partnerships with countries that play key roles in their region or where Norway and the country in question collaborate on important issues, such as South Africa and Jordan.

Many of the priority countries are contexts where Norway has had an engagement over time. Several of the priority countries, such as Afghanistan, Yemen, Mali, Myanmar, Palestine, Sudan and Ukraine, are severely affected by ongoing conflict.

South Africa and Jordan stand out among the priority countries. South Africa is an important regional peace and security actor, with many institutes and NGOs working on peace and security. These provide training for other peace and security actors on the continent, including on WPS (e.g. ACCORD and ISS). The WPS work in South Africa is therefore not so focused on the domestic situation but more on the partnerships with South African NGOs and their peace and security work in Africa as a whole. Norway also has a MOU on peace and reconciliation with South Africa with a focus on WPS, and as such, supports annual capacity building for Women in Southern Africa and regularly meets with South Africa's Department of International Relations and Cooperation to confer on WPS-related matters and specific peace processes. Jordan is a middle-income country and therefore not a typical WPS country. Norway increased the support to Jordan following the civil war in Syria and during the resulting influxes of Syrian refugees to Jordan and Lebanon between 2011 and 2015. This included enhanced support to both the Jordanian authorities and to UN organizations operating in the country. According to interviewees it was attractive to support Jordan because the country handled the crisis very well.

In 2022, an evaluation pointed out that Somalia bore all the characteristics of a priority country yet was not on the list.[42] After its inclusion in the list in 2023, interviewees noted that the status as a priority country did not involve any additional funding to the mission in Somalia to support WPS related activities.[43] To adapt to the new role while at the same time keeping it cost-efficient, the Norwegian representation office outside Mogadishu has arranged a series of workshops with various partners with the aim of raising awareness of the different aspects of the WPS agenda.

41 Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2023.) Norway's National Action Plan: Women, Peace and Security 2023-2030. https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/norways-national-action-plan-women-peace-and-security-2023-2030/id2993862/?ch=1 p. 36.

42 Norad (2022). Evaluation of Norwegian efforts for women, peace and security. NORAD rapport 3. https://www.norad.no/publikasjoner/2022/evaluation-of-norwegian-efforts-for-women-peace-and-security/ Accessed: 02.05.2025.

43 While there is no specific WPS budget for priority countries, interviewees explained that embassies can identify projects that should be supported under the WPS portfolio.

In the priority countries, all the embassies and missions support initiatives on WPS. Still we find that there is much variation in the support to WPS in the priority countries. This is partly a result of the flexible and contextualized approach and differences in country profiles, but it also has to do with the resources and dedication of embassies and missions.

In those countries where Norway is playing a role supporting a peace process, and especially if Norway also has an embassy in the country, the attention and scope of the WPS effort is positively affected.

Given the variation in support and the relatively high number of priority countries, we recommend developing criteria for a country's inclusion or exclusion from the list of priority countries beyond being somewhere Norway has a presence or plays a special role that makes effective engagement possible. It may also be timely for the NMFA to carry out an evaluation and possible adjustments to the list of priority countries, considering the global developments and challenges described in this report.

6.3. Tracking implementation of the WPS NAP 2023-2030

The current WPS NAP (2023-2030) lists the ministries that have primary responsibility for implementing the various points in the NAP. It does not contain a results framework but foresees that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will develop a reporting tool during 2023 and that the NMFA will also obtain annual results reporting from relevant missions. The lack of a results framework in the NAP makes the assessment of the NAP's implementation more challenging. Additionally, rather than a theory of change, the NAP contains several broad goal-formulations. From a monitoring and evaluation perspective, the current NAP appears weaker than its previous iteration from 2019. We therefore recommend that the anticipated reporting tool allows for tracking the implementation of the NAP in a timely manner.[44] This is particularly important considering the potential for resistance and backlash against the WPS agenda in the coming years. In fact, based on conversations with diplomats and activists from other countries, we have learned that in recent years many Western countries have been scaling down the monitoring and evaluation aspect when updating their NAPs. There thus seems to be a trend towards more broad and overarching NAPs with less focus on tools for measuring implementation and progress.

The degree to which the Norwegian NAP is actively used in the embassies' and missions' work varies. While some use it more as a background document, others have more actively utilized the NAP in their WPS efforts. For example, in Myanmar, the embassy has developed a detailed workplan on WPS. In Mozambique, the embassy actively uses the NAP which serves as a guideline for its work in this area. They measure results against the NAP when it comes to reporting and assessing whether the work of UN Women (Norway's main partner in Mozambique) aligns with the Norwegian NAP.
In the case of Somalia (where the mission's resources have been more limited), Norway's priorities have been mostly tied to opportunities and needs on the ground. Here, decisions on what to prioritize have mainly been based on dialogue with partners. How the embassies in the priority countries strategize, structure, and administer WPS efforts are thus to some extent dependent on the embassy in question. While some embassies have developed detailed workplans with clear objectives,

44 According to the NAP, the Ministry will develop a reporting tool in the course of 2023 (p. 37).

activities, and indicators (such as the embassy in Myanmar), other embassies have included broader and more generic objectives on WPS as part of their Operational Plan ("Virksomhetsplan"). The extent to which objectives on WPS are outlined in the Operational Plans also varies.

Embassies with local staff who dedicate a substantial proportion of their time to the WPS portfolio sometimes prefer having a more elaborate WPS strategy, especially if the employees in question have worked at the embassy for a long time. The advantage of staff working on this portfolio over time is they have a more historical and long-term perspective that ensures continuity. Several interviewees expressed that they cover diverse and sometimes large portfolios, among which WPS is only one among many, and in their daily work staff did not always find they had the time to follow up on WPS-related issues and tasks as much as they would like. Smaller embassies or with staff covering WPS as part of a much larger portfolio will thus have less capacity to follow up a detailed workplan on WPS. Interviewees in some of these embassies preferred that objectives on WPS were included as part of the Operational Plan, and that the objectives on WPS in the Operational Plan were somewhat broad and generic. It was argued that broader or more generic goals allow for a more holistic and flexible approach which is especially important in challenging contexts. For them, having a separate strategy or report system was believed to take up too much time and resources given the already heavy workload in several of these stations.

As this discussion shows, the NAP often serves as guidance but is not the only document where strategies and goals on WPS are formulated. For embassies and missions, the Operational Plans are important documents in this regard. Some staff contest the practice of extensive or detailed goal setting and reporting due to limited resources and capacity. We therefore recommend that, when possible, reporting practices are built into existing systems to avoid additional work and ensure buy-in from staff across the foreign service. Given the centrality of Operational Plans to the embassies and mission operations and funding allocation, we also recommend including objectives on WPS in the Operational Plans.

Throughout this research and following from the above discussion, we have found that the NAP is not solely a top-down document that directs the work of the different ministries and actors responsible for its implementation. In fact, many of the priorities outlined in the NAP are consistent with the way the work is carried out on the ground and, in reality, the NAP is a bottom-up product as well. Furthermore, in light of the challenges identified in Section 5, and the fact that WPS is implemented in contexts vulnerable to conflict or crisis, Norwegian support must adapt to challenges and is often driven by context-specific needs or windows of opportunity. For this reason, it may be necessary to adopt a flexible approach with room for adaptation. Further, investments in vulnerable contexts are high-risk, and results can be difficult to assess or even obtain. In these contexts, the flexibility and broad approach of Norwegian WPS support represents an advantage. Therefore, we recommend that the NMFA considers how this can be built into the reporting and monitoring of their work (i.e. emphasizing adaptability and flexibility in the face of challenges as a goal rather than lamenting the lack of results in contexts affected by conflict, for example).

Finally, while the 2023-2030 NAP address changes in the global situation and the consequences of these changes for the WPS agenda are a shared concern among many, the pace and severity of the global changes we are now seeing demands a high-level and strategic discussion about how Norway can adapt its WPS strategies in the light of these new realities. Such discussions should take place internally in the NMFA as well as in dialogue with key stakeholders.

6.4. Measuring results and effects of Norwegian support

Norad measures Norwegian bilateral development and humanitarian assistance to countries affected by war and conflict by using the marker "Gender Equality".[45] In 2023, 6 per cent of Norwegian bilateral support to countries affected by war and conflict – amounting to 1163 million NOK – had "Gender Equality" as the main objective.[46] We find however the Norad statistics provide limited insights when trying to get an overview of Norwegian support to WPS. Norad statistics do not separate between WPS efforts and overall efforts related to gender equality and women's rights. Thus, there is no way to distinguish between funding allocated to gender equality in broader terms and funding allocated to WPS.[47] Support marked with "Gender Equality" may also include gender equality issues that go beyond the scope of WPS, such as support to healthcare, livelihoods, or education. It should also be noted that there is no standardized mechanism for labelling Norwegian funding under the category of "Gender Equality" which means that it is up to the individual registering the funding of a specific project to put "Gender Equality" as a main or significant objective. This may cause inconsistencies in reporting and a lack of clear categorization. If Norway wants to measure support and results on WPS based on aid allocations in the future, we therefore recommend developing improved systems for measuring how aid funding is allocated that have a clearer distinction between WPS and other gender equality issues.

The organization and coordination of work and responsibilities also make it more challenging to measure results. Staff in priority countries report that they do not always have a good overview of the totality of Norwegian support, especially the support that is not administered by the embassy. The NMFA also acknowledges that it is difficult for them to maintain an overview of the extensive work carried out by Norwegian NGOs on the ground. In some contexts, funding is administered partly by Norad, partly by the embassy, and/or partly by another section in the NMFA. This can sometimes create confusion, also for the recipients of the support.

On WPS, interviewees highlight that much of the work is cost-effective yet requires human resources. Norwegian diplomats, Special Envoys, embassies, and partner organizations, do important WPS work through direct engagements, dialogue, training and capacity building with women and women's networks. This also includes the work that we refer to in this report as "normative" (diplomatic and/or political), such as the creation of spaces and platforms or normative support. Much of this work is untraceable over budget lines, but can, according to interviewees, produce significant results.

Measuring the results of WPS support is thus challenging. Many Norwegian embassies and missions report that it is more difficult to assess the impact of dialogues with partners, workshops, and other political and diplomatic engagements. Interviewees also emphasized the challenges related to measuring effects and that while one can make assumptions about normative contributions or

45 Countries affected by war and conflict are defined by the 'Uppsala data set', in addition to Palestine that has also been added to the list. The numbers are excluding core funding to multilateral organizations.

46 Source: Norad. Projects where "Gender Equality" is the main objective will not commence unless gender equality serves the main purpose of the project. In projects where "Gender Equality" is a significant objective, it does not serve the main purpose of a given project but still holds significance. See Norad (2025) Likestilling. Norad. https://resultater.norad.no/tema/likestilling Accessed: 29.04.2025.

47 For an assessment of the effects of Norwegian WPS efforts supported with Norwegian development aid funds, see Norad (2022). Evaluation of Norwegian efforts for women, peace and security. NORAD rapport 3.
https://www.norad.no/publikasjoner/2022/evaluation-of-norwegian-efforts-for-women-peace-and-security/ Accessed: 12.05.2025.

influence, you will never know for certain what it can be directly attributed to. This also concerns financial contributions to some extent, although several missions report that funding can be more easily measured through grant agreements and the result frameworks that it is measured against. Nevertheless, missions try to assess results of non-monetary modes of engagement through, for instance, reporting on number of participants in workshops and events, the number of women participating in peace talks and negotiations, as well as through the number of meetings and events (co)hosted by Norway. It is, however, challenging to measure the actual effect and influence of participation on results. Exchange of feedback can, however, be a useful tool in assessing impact and it allows Norway to adapt accordingly.

Another challenge for reporting discussed in this report is the fact that, in some contexts, there are projects where WPS is not a defined target because it is very sensitive or where women's organizations cannot openly disclose their work or report on the results due to fear of reprisals. We expect this to remain a challenge in the coming years, possibly to a greater extent, and we recommend that the NMFA considers including in its guidelines advice on how to work with and report on WPS in settings where this is a challenge.

In sum, when it comes to measuring results of Norway's WPS efforts, we find that getting a complete overview of the support is challenging. As we discuss throughout this report, Norwegian support and funding to WPS takes multiple shapes and forms and is disbursed and administered by several entities and mechanisms. The recent restructuring of responsibilities between the NMFA and Norad may however be a window of opportunity for improved information sharing. In August 2024, the responsibility for management of funds belonging to the humanitarian portfolio was transferred, along with several other funding portfolios, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Norad. There is much to gain from Norad and the NMFA working more closely together, both in terms of reporting as well as through learning and sharing information. Norad and NMFA should also engage in dialogue about how to better utilize the information and knowledge from partners and networks supported by Norway.

6.5. Key Findings

- While there is some variation in how much time and effort is put into promoting the WPS agenda or related work in different parts of the system, overall we find that knowledge about the agenda is widespread.
- While all missions in priority countries support initiatives on WPS, we find that there is significant variation in this support.
- In those countries where Norway is playing a role supporting a peace process, and especially if Norway also has an embassy in the country, the attention to and scope of the WPS effort is positively affected.
- How much time and resources embassies can dedicate to WPS depends on several issues: the size of the embassy or mission, the workload of individual staff, whether staff are able to work on the WPS portfolio over time, and to some extent on personal interest and dedication.
- Institutionalization is thus found be somewhat uneven and ongoing. Challenges to institutionalization include turnover and rotation of staff.

- The Special Envoy's role in coordination, and supporting peer learning and exchange for staff working in the priority countries can support institutionalization.
- When it comes to tracking implementation of the 2023-2030 NAP, it remains to be seen how this can be effectively carried out given that there is no results framework included in the NAP.
- The degree to which the NAP is actively used in the embassies' and missions' work varies.
- Norwegian support to WPS is broad and takes several forms, and is disbursed through ODA, framework agreements, and secondments/deployments, in addition to the diplomatic normative and institutional work to promote WPS.
- Owing to the breadth and complexity of WPS support, it can be difficult to get a complete overview.
- Norad statistics covering aid allocations marked with "Gender Equality" provide only limited insights into the totality of support and results on WPS.
- In challenging and vulnerable contexts, the flexible and broad approach of Norwegian WPS support represents an advantage.
- Much WPS work such as direct engagements, dialogue, training and capacity building with women and women's networks is cost-effective yet requires human resources.

7. Conclusion

This report finds that many important tools, frameworks, policies, and practices have been established, but this work is somewhat uneven and requires continued effort. While there is some variation in how much time and effort is put into promoting the WPS agenda or related work in different parts of the system, overall there is a high degree of knowledge in the NMFA regarding the work and support to WPS. This is most visible in areas such as peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements, and humanitarian response, while other areas are still under development. We also find that all missions in the priority countries support initiatives on WPS, although there is significant variation in this support. In those countries where Norway is playing a role supporting a peace process, and especially if Norway also has an embassy in the country, the attention to and scope of the WPS effort is positively affected.

In this report we reflect upon how Norwegian support to WPS is broad and complex and getting a complete overview of the support to WPS can be challenging. One aspect of this relates to measuring the support to gender equality through aid funding. This does not provide a satisfactory overview of funding to WPS. The fact that Norwegian WPS support takes many forms and is administered by different parts of the system also contributes to this problem. Finally, much diplomatic normative support remains challenging to measure, yet we hope this report contributes to achieving greater clarity by providing insights into the nature of Norwegian WPS support, particularly in the priority countries.

Norwegian support to WPS in the priority countries is characterized by a broad and flexible approach in fragile contexts. The support takes multiple forms, including funding to and through UN agencies, to international, Norwegian, and local NGOs, deployments and secondments to peacekeeping missions and international and regional organizations, and support for building capacity and knowledge. Further, this report identifies a range of diplomatic normative and institutional work, such as when ambassadors use the embassy as an informal meeting space to discuss with female representatives their engagement with the peace process. These are important tools and practices in the Norwegian support to WPS but they are not always easily measured.

The report further finds that Norwegian support in the priority contexts is affected by challenges such as increases in violent conflict and changes to the political context, including rising antifeminism and autocratic developments. In the most challenging contexts, this often results in a shift from strategic to needs-driven support. In these contexts, the flexibility and broad approach of Norwegian WPS support is an advantage. We also find that in many cases the NMFA is able to adapt its support and approach in response to changes in country situations and remain a partner and supporter of WPS in those contexts.

We find that the 2023-2030 NAP succeeds in setting overarching priorities and in mobilizing and raising awareness, yet there is variation in the extent to which the NAP is a driver or tool of (top-down) strategic implementation of efforts. For most interviewees, the NAP serves as guidance, but it is not the only document where strategies and goals on WPS are formulated. At the time of writing, there is no results framework or reporting tool for tracking the implementation of the 2023-2030

NAP, which makes the assessment of the NAP's implementation more challenging.
We also find that there is unevenness in the support to and approach to WPS in the different priority countries. In light of current global challenges and recent cuts in development aid by other donors, we recommend revisiting the rationales for the inclusion or exclusion of a country from the list of priority countries. We also note that many embassies struggle to follow up and prioritize WPS-related work. A clearer mandate for the priority countries might provide guidance and support in this respect.

We also observe that Norwegian support is, in many ways, affected by challenges related to the gender backlash and resistance to WPS. The pace and severity of the global changes we are now seeing demands a principal and strategic discussion about how Norway should adapt its WPS strategies in the light of the new realities. We consider it a real risk that language on gender is disappearing from important policy discussions where WPS is relevant (we already see increased contestation on WPS language in NATO and the UNSC), and that gender may be removed as a target in contexts where it is deemed too sensitive. However, while contestation of the WPS agenda and funding cuts from other donors remains a challenge to the broader implementation, this can also be a window of opportunity for Norway to further accentuate its position as a global normative leader on WPS.

Widespread capacity and knowledge, paired with broad and flexible funding, enables Norway to influence processes and outcomes at the international, national, and local level. The work with institutionalizing and building knowledge about the WPS agenda in the Foreign Service must be seen as an ongoing endeavour however. Having guidelines and NAPs will not be sufficient if these are not deemed relevant or fit for purpose by a critical mass among the Foreign Service. As the Foreign Service is navigating an increasingly demanding global environment, other issues may take priority and this can eventually threaten the shared understanding of WPS as a priority area in Norwegian foreign policy. Maintaining WPS as a priority must therefore be a strategic decision and buy-in must be sought from the Foreign Service at large.

8. Recommendations

Faced with global contestation of the WPS agenda and funding cuts from other donors, Norway should work to maintain and strengthen its position as a global normative leader on WPS. To this end, Norway should:

- Work on safeguarding language on gender and use various platforms and tools to continue to promote the agenda, e.g. in NATO and UNSC.
- Engage in a principal and strategic discussion about how Norway should adapt its WPS strategies when faced with new realities (e.g. which existing and new partnerships and allies should Norway embrace and collaborate with on WPS? Is the Norwegian approach of broad support fit for the future, or is a shift towards a more targeted approach warranted?). Discussions should take place internally, as well as with key stakeholders.
- Consider how Norway can contribute to raising the profile of the WPS agenda even higher. This could for example involve high-level and high-visibility events, naming "WPS ambassadors", or allocating significant funding to flagship projects that have the possibility to make a difference and raise the status of a particular issue area.
- Continue the ongoing work with institutionalization in its own organization. This is particularly important as the focus shifts towards defence and national security. There needs to be an awareness of how WPS is also relevant beyond Norway's support to third countries.
- Continue its support to the external FPN network, and to making this network as broad and inclusive as possible. And use this network as a platform for the sharing of experiences and lessons beyond its own organization.

In the priority countries, Norway should:

- Maintain a broad and flexible approach in the face of changes in conflict situations and in the political situation, with a focus on maintaining support to women peacebuilders and human rights defenders.
- Continue to support learning and improvement of innovative funding mechanisms to make funding more available to local women's organizations and human rights defenders (such as the WPHF).
- Make even better use of the knowledge and experiences generated by local partners and networks to inform Norway's work both locally and globally, e.g. when Norwegian representatives sit on the boards of institutions and structures such as UN Women or the WPHF. This may require getting a better overview of the support.
- When possible, continue using the embassy as an informal meeting place for women leaders and activists.
- Pay attention to how changes in the political situation affect language and the room for manoeuvre on WPS and gender issues, including where these may be removed as a target in contexts where they are deemed too sensitive.

- Develop a rationale for the inclusion or exclusion of a country from the list of priority countries beyond the criteria of being a country where Norway has a presence or plays a special role that makes effective engagement possible. Carry out an evaluation of the list of priority countries and possibly make adjustments.

Considering the potential for resistance and backlash against the WPS agenda, tracking implementation of the 1325 NAP and support to WPS will be important in the coming years. To this end, Norway should:

- Develop a reporting tool which allows for tracking implementation of the NAP in a timely manner.
- Consider how reporting practices can be built into existing systems to avoid additional work and ensure buy-in from staff across the foreign service.
- Consider how the flexibility and broad approach of Norwegian WPS support can be built into the reporting and monitoring of this work (i.e. emphasising adaptability and flexibility in the face of challenges as goals, rather than stressing lack of results in contexts affected by conflict for example).
- Given the centrality of Operational Plans to the embassies and missions' operations and funding allocations, we also recommend including objectives on WPS in the Operational Plans.
- Develop guidelines for how to work with and report on WPS in settings where gender is deemed very sensitive and potentially excluded from project reporting.
- Ensure closer collaboration between the NMFA and Norad, both in terms of reporting and learning and information-sharing. Norad and NMFA should also engage in dialogue about how to better utilize the information and knowledge from partners and networks supported by Norway.
- If aid allocations are used to track support and results on WPS, take into account the lack of a clear distinction between WPS and other gender equality issues.

9. List of Documents

2006	The Norwegian Government's Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security.
2011	Women, Peace and Security. Norway's Strategic Plan 2011-13.
2015	National Action Plan. Women, Peace and Security 2015-18.
2019	The Norwegian Government's Action Plan. Women, Peace and Security, 2019-2022.
2023	Norway's National Action Plan. Women, Peace and Security (2023-2030).
2024	Women, Peace and Security. Guidelines for the Norwegian Foreign Service (2023-2030).
	WPS Strategy of the Section for Peace and Reconciliation (Internal document).

10. List of interviews

#	Country/thematic context	Organization	Date
1	Peace and Reconciliation	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	14.10.2024
2	Special Envoy Sahel	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	17.10.2024
3	Security Policy	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	30.10.2024
4	CRSV Training Officer	NORCAP	12.11.2024
5	Women Protection Adviser	NORCAP	21.11.2024
6	Colombia	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	2.12.2024
7	Colombia	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	3.12.2024
8	South Africa	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	3.12.2024
9	Somalia	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	4.12.2024
10	OSCE	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	4.12.2024
11	Colombia	UN Women	6.12.2024
12	Ukraine	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	12.12.2024
13	Colombia	UN Women	13.12.2024
14	Sudan	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	16.12.2024
15	South Sudan	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	18.12.2024
16	Nigeria	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	6.1.2025
17	Afghanistan	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	7.1.2025
18	Jordan	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	9.1.2025
19	Humanitarian Policy	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	16.1.2025
20	Mali	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	17.1.25
21	Mali	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	20.1.2025
22	Mozambique	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	20.1.2025
23	South Sudan	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	21.1.2025
24	Palestine	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	27.1.2025
25	Senior Adviser	Norad	4.2.2025
26	NATO	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	4.2.2025
27	Myanmar	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	6.2.2025
28	OSCE	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	10.2.2025
29	Yemen	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	11.2.2025

30	Special Envoy WPS	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	12.2.2025
31	South Sudan	UN Women	17.2.2025
32	South Sudan	Norwegian People's Aid	25.2.2025
33	Philippines	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	14.5.2025

11. Interview guide

Interview guide: Research project on Norway's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security: Status overview and study of peace processes

1. Introduction and informed consent procedure
2. Can you tell us about the work that Norway does on Women, Peace and Security (WPS)?
    a. In the country or field you work in?
    b. Which aspects of WPS and/or the Norwegian national action plan are covered? Some more than others?
    c. Specific projects to highlight?
3. What parts of Norwegian support do you consider to be working well or less well?
    a. Can you identify some best practices?
    b. Do you experience any challenges?
    c. Are there some contexts or thematic areas where this is more challenging? Or where this works better?
4. To what extent do you think that Norwegian support/efforts manage to reach their intended goals?
    a. Are the goals clear? What are they?
    b. Is it clear how they will be reached? Are the WPS guidelines useful?
5. What is the impact of Norwegian efforts and support to WPS, and how is this measured?
    a. What is captured/measurable/visible?
    b. Are there some impacts that are not captured?
6. Are there challenges related to measuring impact on WPS?
    a. Are there some contexts or thematic areas where this is more challenging? Or where this works better?
7. Is there anything you wish to add, or someone else that you think we should talk to?

Thank you!

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