

POLICY PAPER

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA: GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

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IMPLEMENTATION OF UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325 ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY: BETWEEN COMMITMENT AND NECESSITY

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Introduction

Since the adoption of **UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325)** some 23 years have passed and the Republic of Moldova has only recently adopted the second Action Plan for the implementation of the Resolution. However, the question "why" still persists on the agenda of discussions regarding the relevance of its implementation. Therefore, this analytical note aims at clarifying and analysing issues related to the need for implementation of UNSCR 1325 in general, and the prerequisites for its implementation at the national level. The structure of the content of the analytical note is determined by the fact that although it would seem that a well-defined framework for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 already exists, the awareness of its necessity is not yet sufficiently visible or absorbed at both the level of decision-makers and at the level of implementation. Moreover, the fluctuation of frameworks leading to the disruption of institutional memory on the implementation of actions with reference to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS Agenda) calls for a synthesis of the provisions with reference to the core objectives of UNSCR 1325 and an understanding of how actions can be implemented through its four pillars. We have also tried to highlight, through comparison, common aspects, but also the specificities of the two Programmes adopted by the Republic of Moldova in the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

Finally, an important component of the note refers to lessons learned, and also successful practices that have determined the qualitative aspect of the actions, which in fact also determined the specificity of the proposed recommendations. Moreover, although it would seem that the need for the UNSCR 1325 Implementation Programme adopted in March 2023 is in a fragile security context, both for Moldova and the states on the European continent, there is a danger of so-called excuses in its implementation. As seen in the pandemic period, when it was argued that it is not time for the WPS Agenda, although the impact of crises and conflicts have different implications on women/girls and men/boys and respectively call for actions according to security needs, but also the involvement of women in peace and conflict processes.

Awareness of the need to implement UN SC Resolution 1325 on SPF through understanding its provisions

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security calls on all actors to protect women's rights, prevent violence against women and girls, take into account their needs and priorities, and involve women in conflict prevention processes, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction.

For the first time in an international agreement, the importance of addressing women's contribution to peace, security and development is highlighted. UNSCR 1325 (paragraph 4) urges the Secretary-General to expand the role and contribution of women in UN field operations, particularly among military observers, civilian police, and human rights and humanitarian personnel. In this context, we should highlight that one of the priorities of the National Army of the Republic of Moldova, is the participation of Moldovan military in peacekeeping missions. This reflects well the state's aspirations to promote the ideas of peace, stability and security, both within the country and abroad. Highlighting the States' contribution to the fortification of peace, where the number of participants in such missions are 2% women. (Although in 2015 the total number of participants was no more than 1%).

In order to facilitate the achievement of the objectives proposed in UNSCR 1325, each of the resolution's mandates must be related to one of the four core pillars: **participation, protection, prevention, recovery**.

- The **PARTICIPATION** pillar calls for increased involvement of women: (-) at all levels of decision-making, including in national, regional and international institutions; (-) in conflict prevention, management and resolution mechanisms; (-) in peace negotiations; (-) in peace operations, as soldiers, police and civilians; and (-) as special representatives of the UN Secretary-General.
- The **PROTECTION** pillar specifically calls for the protection of women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence, including in emergency and humanitarian situations, such as in refugee camps.
- The **PREVENTION** pillar calls for improved intervention strategies in: (-) preventing violence against women, including by prosecuting those responsible for violations of international law; (-) strengthening women's rights under national law; and (-) supporting local peacekeeping initiatives and conflict resolution processes. Importantly, in the context of security policies, the value of this pillar relates to: (-) short-term approaches to include women's participation and gender indicators in early warning systems; and (-) long-term approaches to address structural causes of conflict, including inequality, and to address new sources of conflict, such as climate change and natural resource extraction. Furthermore, **prevention has become a key concept in the context of the development of the second UNSCR 1325 Implementation Programme**.
- The **RELIEF** and **RECOVERY** pillar calls for the promotion of rescue and recovery measures to address international crises through a gender lens/dimension, including respecting the civilian and humanitarian nature of refugee camps, and taking into account the needs of women and girls in the design of refugee camps and settlements.

In implementing the four pillars, organisations and states usually adopt an *Action Plan* with reference to UNSCR 1325 as well as other related resolutions as per previous recommendations made by the UN on the elaboration of national action plans. Given the fact that States differ from one another and hold varying views on gender for a variety of reasons, there is no homogeneous set of policy tools for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the WPS Agenda.

Finally, the *Women, Peace and Security Agenda* does not only focus on situations where peace is immediately threatened, but also aims to ensure greater participation of women in the political sphere as a whole.

For example, Article 1 of UNSCR 1325 *urges Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and in conflict prevention, management and resolution mechanisms*. This call is driven by the fact that it is not enough to implement the WPS agenda by including more women in conflict and post-conflict situations just because it is demanded or for the sake of commitments, but that women need to be included in everyday political and institutional life to make their participation meaningful.

Advantages of developing and approving the National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325

In line with the four pillars, UNSCR 1325 highlights that women's participation is an imperative in processes that involve action: (-) from demining to disarmament, (-) demobilisation to reintegration (DDR), (-) from elections to constitutional change, (-) from security sector reform (SSR) to transitional justice measures, (-) from economic recovery programmes to long-term conflict prevention initiatives, (-) from negotiating peace agreements to addressing refugee and displaced persons issues). However, in recent years, many National Action Plans (NAPs) implementing UNSCR 1325 have incorporated other issues, such as climate change, human trafficking and the prevention of violent extremism. Hence the relevance of developing a NAP based on the needs of each country, at the same time, the increased range of topics with which a NAP operates can still generate a complex coordination process, as responsibilities for such topics often span several different portfolios or lines of responsibility in government [1].

Within this framework, globally, 107 (55%) UN member states have adopted a NAP on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 [2], recognising that it ensures the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in a peace and security framework relevant to all areas of the security sector. The Government of the Republic of Moldova took the decision to develop and approve such a programme primarily for 2 drivers: 1. Commitment to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the framework of the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) Republic of Moldova - NATO for the years 2014- 2016, and 2. Identification of certain limitations/barriers in ensuring an inclusive security sector at the national level.

As mentioned above, the four pillars of UNSCR 1325 implementation facilitate the structuring of priority interventions or sectoral actions within the WPS Agenda Action Plans. Indeed, UNSCR 1325 does not specify the content of the reforms, or how they will be implemented, or the procedures needed to ensure implementation of its provisions. Moreover, from the perspective of states UNSCR 1325 appears to be complicated rather than complex, which raises the question of whether generic gender mainstreaming tools can be effectively applied in conflict prevention, resolution and reconstruction mechanisms. Countries are therefore encouraged to define precisely the relevant procedures in action plans. The UN's previous recommendations on the development of national action plans emphasise that these plans must respect the national legislative and policy framework for their subsequent implementation.

[1] Myrtilinen h., Shepherd I. J., Wright H. Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the OSCE Region, 2020, p. 1.

National strategies or action plans to implement UNSCR 1325 are relevant to all countries, not just those involved in conflict. States are often affected by conflicts with neighbours, other countries in the same region or donor countries that are involved in peace efforts. In addition, states are already examining how women, as a human resource, can be included in national security structures. Several studies have shown, for example, that the inclusion of more women in the military and peacekeeping operations has greatly increased the effectiveness of managing military operations. This can be achieved and enhanced by improving awareness and knowledge of specific security threats which will ensure that the promotion of gender-sensitive policies to address different security needs is reinforced. Despite the Programme adopted and the discussions initiated on the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of different security needs, there are still some limitations on the awareness of the need to implement the WPS Agenda.

Thus, the development and approval of a National Action Plan on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 can have multiple positive implications, ensuring:

- **Oversight and comprehensiveness:** The NAP provides governments with the opportunity to go through all the policies of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda implemented by different government institutions, ensuring that the provisions of the Agenda are taken into account, and that no essential areas are omitted.
- **Coordinate and avoid duplication of effort:** When the work of several government institutions is coordinated, synergies are created that help different institutions work towards the same goal. In addition, it helps to avoid duplication of work when expertise and knowledge is shared rather than collected by each institution on its own.
- **Raising awareness:** UNSCR 1325 may not be equally known to all relevant government bodies or well known to civil society. The creation of a NAP enables relevant government actors as well as civil society to be informed and educated.
- **Governance/ownership:** The creation of a national action plan in which different ministries and agencies contribute could bring a broader sense of ownership of the WPS Agenda.
- **Accountability:** By implementing a national action plan, it is easier to track what relevant actions have been identified, and who is responsible for implementation.

Finally, let us not forget that an NAP must correspond to national needs, i.e. the current situation specific to each individual country in relation to the regional and international security environment; at the same time, the support of international partners is important, but the commitment of the national government is vital. Therefore, in the following, we will highlight the perspective of the Republic of Moldova in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the factors that determined the structure of the National Action Plans.

National perspective on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security: context, issues identified and objectives to be achieved

In general, the Republic of Moldova's political and legal framework for ensuring equality between women and men has substantially improved in recent decades. Various legislative acts contain provisions which directly or indirectly refer to the principles of non-discrimination and equality, being regulated both in codified legislation (Criminal Code, Criminal Procedure Code, Civil Code, Civil Procedure Code, Contravention Code, Labour Code, Education Code, etc.) and in the organic and ordinary laws of the Republic of Moldova.

During 2016 - 2018, for the Republic of Moldova, the Women, Peace and Security Agenda was a relatively new topic, b u t there were some lessons learned:

(-) the need to encourage decision-makers to stimulate the political will to implement UNSCR 1325,

(-) the need to ensure an inclusive security sector;

(-) lack of resources dedicated to the implementation of UNSCR 1325;

(-) the need for development and consolidate colaboration with civil society.

Referring to the political-legal framework, it is worth mentioning the *Strategy for ensuring equality between women and men in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2017- 2021*, which in addition to objectives such as ensuring a comprehensive approach to equality between women and men through the participation of women in decision-making, strengthening the institutional mechanism for ensuring gender equality, combating stereotypes in society and promoting non- violent communication has established actions in ensuring gender equality in the security and defence sector [2]. Thus, General Objective 4 of the Strategy established the need to promote gender equality in the security and defence sector (Specific Objective 4.1: Ensure women's access to management and executive positions in the field of security and defence; Specific Objective 4.2: Mainstream gender in sectoral security and defence policies).

Within this framework, it is important to highlight that this Strategy has been an important tool for ensuring gender equality - a concept that contributes to the creation of gender-sensitive institutions in the security and defence sector that effectively respond to the security needs of men, women, boys and girls, as well as ensuring an inclusive security and defence system. It is from this perspective that the phenomenon of discrimination is more often highlighted. For example, if one orders boots or military attire for the Army all of one size, then they will fit some but not others. Thus, soldiers are treated the same, but this is not equal treatment, as the benefits and effects will not be the same for all. But if we look at it from a gender perspective, the same military outfit can be tailored not only to the size, but also to the physical appearance of men and women.

[2] Available: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=99875&lang=ro

If we come back directly to UNSCR 1325, it is worth recalling that the Government of Moldova took the decision to develop an NAP on the basis of commitments undertaken in the framework of the Moldova-NATO Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) for 2014-2016 and 2017-2019.

In addition, the Strategy for Ensuring Equality between Women and Men in the Republic of Moldova, (considered as the umbrella for the NAP process) included a separate objective. This proposed in **Action 5 a commitment to Ensure the implementation of General Recommendation No. 30 of the CEDAW Committee and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security** through the development of an Action Plan.

Respectively, an Action Plan for the strict implementation of UNSCR 1325 was adopted in 2018 by approving the National Programme for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security for the years 2018-2021 (hereinafter - Programme). It was the first instrument setting out the implementation actions, expected results and indicators for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 at the Government of the Republic of Moldova and national level respectively.

In general, by approving the Programme, the Republic of Moldova undertakes to:

- *to enhance the strategic focus of its efforts in implementing Resolution 1325;*
- *to develop and provide a uniform framework for its actions/measures.*

Actually, the process of elaboration of the Programme has undergone several stages: from the inter-institutional self-assessment on the gender dimension in the national security and defence sector, to the diversification of the actors who came in support (UN Women in Moldova, civil society and academia). At the same time, in the process of elaboration of the Programme, a particular priority was the regional experience. Respectively, through the project, working groups were consulted and guided by international experts from state institutions and non-governmental organizations from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Serbia, Spain, Ukraine and the United States of America.

Two groups of problems identified in the process of developing the Programme:

- (I) the low rate of representation of women in the sector; and*
- (II) that the sector is not inclusive enough.*

Indeed, the national perspective of implementing UNSCR 1325 was and still is determined, firstly by the international and national commitments undertaken by the Government of the Republic of Moldova in implementing UNSCR 1325. Secondly, the identification of the problems related to the participation of women in the security and defence sector has established the need for the elaboration and approval of the **Programme**.

At the same time, the gaps identified from both a sector and societal perspective were structured into eight basic barriers: (1) Gender stereotypes persist within the system (but also outside it) about women's participation in the security sector. (2) The security and defence sector do not allow men and women to combine work and family life. (3) The security and defence sector does not have the full capacity to prevent and combat gender-based discrimination, harassment, and violence. (4) The security and defence sector does not have an inclusive and proactive system of human resources management. (5) The security and defence sector does not apply reasonable adjustment and

temporary special measures to enable a wider representation of women. (6) The security and defence sector is not sufficiently transparent towards the participation of civil society, women's organisations and citizens. (7) Security and defence sector policies are gender insensitive.(8) Limited policies on ensuring equal participation in peacebuilding and peacekeeping missions. **As a result of these identified barriers, eight core objectives and actions were established to combat or mitigate the impact of these eight barriers.**

The Programme also established the institutions responsible for its implementation and the procedures for reporting, monitoring and evaluating the level of achievement of the Action Plan. As the security sector does not only refer to public order and military structures, but involves institutions responsible for certain areas of the security system as well as for national security policies (Reintegration Policy Office, Customs Service, Information and Security Service, Ministry of Justice, State Chancellery and last but not least a key partner is the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection) and those ensuring international cooperation on the security dimension, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration. In this context, a special role was played by the need for the structures of force to raise awareness of the need for collaboration on the gender dimension with civil society and academia, thus ensuring the promotion of the positive image of the institutions in the sector in society. The Reintegration Policy Office of the State Chancellery was the institution that was to inform the Government, on an annual basis, about the implementation of the Action Plan of the Programme. And the control over the implementation of this decision was the responsibility of the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of the reintegration policies of the country.

Thus, the purpose of the Programme, as stated in the document, *was to express the organisational*

will of institutions in the security and defence sector on implementation and applying the provisions of the UNSCR and related resolutions and other complementary instruments in ensuring gender mainstreaming within the institutions concerned (Chapter III - institutional framework) in order to achieve the missions set. Two basic objectives have been set to achieve the proposed goal:

(1) increasing the representation of women in the security sector and (2) ensuring an inclusive security sector through the implementation of eight core programmes, adopted as **eight objectives.**

The eight general objectives of the first Programme
1.Reducing stereotypes about the role of women in security sector.
2.Increase opportunities for women and men in the system to combine work and family life.
3.Prevent and combat discrimination, harassment and gender-based violence within the sector.
4.Develop an inclusive and pro-active human resource management system.
5. Implementation of reasonable adjustment and temporary special measures within the security system.
6. Strengthen transparency and involvement of civil society in decisions taken by the security system.
7.Institutional capacity building for gender mainstreaming in security policies.
8.Increasing women's participation in peacebuilding and peacekeeping missions.

For the most part, the first Programme is not structurally delineated according to the four pillars. However, the synergy between the Programme's objectives and the pillars of UNSCR 1325 were taken into account, as the working group considered relevant at the time, a focus on sensitive issues that limit the understanding of the role of women in security and defence. Moreover, although security sector institutions have related but different missions, the status of employees may be different or the working hours may be special. In this respect, for example, the issue of women's participation in peacekeeping missions is specific to the Ministry of Defence and may in the future be a topic of discussion for the Ministry of Internal Affairs. And the absence of women from peace negotiations and peace-building processes is already a proven phenomenon, i.e. there is a need to develop policies on women's involvement in negotiation and mediation processes. Coherent and comprehensive approaches and strategies for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 become even more important when looking at the realities on the ground. At international as well as national level there is still no *critical mass* of women negotiators and mediators involved in formal peace processes. The number of women negotiators, mediators and signatories to peace agreements remains very low [3].

The second generation of the NAP for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 was approved by the Government of the Republic of Moldova on 22 March 2023 and was developed with the support of UN Women and the Swedish Embassy in Chisinau. While the **first Programme** focused primarily on women's participation in the security and defence sectors using three basic approaches: (1) Reducing stereotypes about the role of women in the security sector; (2) Developing an inclusive and proactive human resources management system; (3) Strengthening transparency and civil society involvement in decisions taken by the security system. The **Second Programme focuses more on prevention**. As the Republic of Moldova is an EU candidate country with an active border war, it is essential to address the human rights perspective as well as the fight against any kind of abuse and discrimination in order to ensure peace and security. **According to its provisions, women are not only beneficiaries of security, but are given an active role in creating the security context.**

It seems that the war in Ukraine has influenced the perception of security needs: 87% of refugees in Moldova are women and children. At the same time, the new Programme found that without dedicated and measurable state intervention on all issues, progress on impact outcomes will be uneven, with tendencies to discourage women's involvement in maintaining peace and security, and to accentuate inequalities in the security and defence sector. These developments may proportionately affect the emergence of new barriers and gaps in gender mainstreaming in the security and defence sector.

Within this framework, the current Programme focuses on three dimensions: (i) based on commitments: national development strategy European Moldova 2030, Sustainable Development Agenda Moldova 2030 (Goal No. 5.); (ii) influenced by the current security environment: the Covid-19

[3] Facts and figures: Peace and security, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peaceand-security/facts-and-figures>

pandemic, the war in Ukraine, internal and external factors that could influence the dynamics and evolution of possible escalations or deteriorations of human rights; (iii) to ensure the prevention of inequalities, violence and harassment in the security and defence sector by reducing risks and eliminating the consequences associated with discrimination.

At the same time, the process of implementing UNSCR 1325, regardless of the first or second Programme, involves strengthening common understanding on:

The new Programme is based on the 4 pillars of Resolution 1325, which transpose 6 areas of intervention (general objective)
O1: increase the level of participation and representation of women in the security and defence sector
O2: preventing inequalities, violence and harassment in the security and defence sector by reducing risks and eliminating consequences associated with discrimination
O3: protection through good governance and developed capabilities
O4: rehabilitation people affected through measures effective, sustainable and smart
O5: humanitarian support for women and girls from conflict and post-conflict areas
O6: communication and reporting to improve transparency procedures through effective communication

- ▶ Ensuring leadership sensitivity by: (I) continuously educating stakeholders and the public in the culture of peace and (II) promoting the role of women in peace and conflict processes.
- ▶ Increasing the representation of women in security and defence by strengthening: (I) transparency and (II) building monitoring mechanisms.

There are also cross-cutting issues that run through both programmes, for example the dilemma of work and the prospect of motherhood. Although in the process of implementing the first Programme, institutions reported on the creation of flexible working hours and the reconciliation of work and family life, some particular issues were not adopted in accordance with reasonable measures. For example, the conditions of studies in military educational institutions which do not **consider** the biological differences between women and men. According to the Regulation on the organisation and conduct of the educational process in the Military Academy of the Armed Forces "Alexandru cel Bun", absence from activities is allowed only in the case of the performance of service duties. These rigid provisions create significant obstacles for women **during** pregnancy, **childbirth**, or lactation.

As a result, rigid maternity and childcare leave provisions lead women to choose between motherhood and career advancement, a barrier that was identified in the process of developing the Programme. That said there have been efforts to remedy the situation, **however**, there have not been strong enough voices to regulate the problem that affects directly women.

Good practices and lessons learned in the context of UNSCR 1325 implementation

Good practice

Specifically for the security and defence sector, good practices have served, on the one hand, as the premise on which the current National Programme is based and, on the other hand, used as indicators in its evaluation process.

In some countries, the coordinator of the UNSCR 1325 NAP implementation process is an institution at Government or Parliament level. This can have important implications for the implementation of this plan.

For the Republic of Moldova, this aspect was valuable in the process of setting up the group on the elaboration of the evaluated Programme, as well as in the endorsement and approval process. The coordination of the elaboration of the Programme and the monitoring of the implementation was assumed by the Office for Reintegration, respectively the Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration - a hierarchical lever on the relevant ministries which gave the Programme a high status.

At the same time, the inter-institutional communication platform set up informally in the process of developing the Programme has allowed in the implementation process to ensure an institutional partnership on the dissemination of the experience of implementing the SPF Agenda.

International practice shows that some states, which have already developed and adopted the third or fourth generation of NAPs implementing UNSCR 1325, are pursuing new and emerging objectives and areas of concern to a broad peace and security agenda geared towards assisting other countries in promoting human rights and human security ideals.

Respectively, by developing such a plan for the first time, the Republic of Moldova through its real commitment to rethinking social norms on gender relations in the security and defence sector and reducing gender inequalities and forms of discrimination in these institutions contributes to ensuring human rights and human security. For example, the need to combine work and family life has been addressed in a socially inclusive framework by expressing a commitment *to promote the concept of active fatherhood and family sharing* as an element of SPF work. In this regard we mention the project "Men get involved" - an initiative launched by UNFPA Moldova and UN Women Moldova in which security sector employees also participated.

Thus, according to the evaluation carried out, it is considered that "it is a worthwhile effort to make a connection between societal norms or expectations regarding women's roles in society with the more specific gender equality project under the WPS Agenda".

In this context, it is worth mentioning that due to anti-discrimination policies and the UNSCR 1325 Bridging Programme, as of 1 January 2019, men performing military service under contract can benefit from paternity leave. The amendments to the legislation, which made it possible to guarantee the right of men performing military service by contract to paternity leave, were developed within the framework of the project "Support for security sector reform in the Republic of Moldova", funded by the Ministry of Defence and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). At the national level, in April 2016, Law No. 71 was adopted, according to which for the first time fathers can benefit from 14 days of paternity leave, paid from the social security fund.

A good practice refers to the creation of the Association of Women in the National Army in the implementation process of the Programme. The practice of creating such associations within the security and defence system is valuable as it strengthens direct collaboration with donors and non-governmental organisations to address the needs of female personnel in the sector. In some countries, e.g. Bulgaria, such an Association actively monitors the situation of official complaints of discrimination, abuse or harassment. Within the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MAI) and the Ministry of Defence (MA) with the support of UN Women, UNDP Moldova and other donors aim at empowering and inspiring the members of the associations and ensuring continuity for other female employees in the system.

Last but not least, the mere existence of the Programme has increased the visibility of the SPF Agenda at governmental level, but in particular it has oriented civil society towards the development of projects and initiatives for the sector, while the lack of institutional capacity to implement the Programme has helped to open up the sector to civil society. The development of the Programme should be considered a good practice at national level. Within this framework, the participation of high-level/ranking management, e.g. ministers, even if not totally in line with the gender perspective in the security and defence sector, contributes to the accountability of the implemented actions.

On the other hand, from a good practice perspective, in a broader sense, the existence of a policy framework on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 ensures a gender mainstreaming approach in the security sector by offering governments: (-) the opportunity to go through all the Women, Peace and Security Agenda policies implemented by different government institutions, ensuring that the provisions of the Agenda are taken into account and no key area is omitted, ensuring *oversight* and *comprehensiveness*; (-) the opportunity to have a coordinated process by avoiding duplication of efforts, when expertise and knowledge is shared rather than collected by each institution on its own; (-) the framework for informing relevant government actors as well as civil society about the WPS Agenda, thus contributing to raising awareness; (-) the chance to develop a wider sense of ownership of the WPS Agenda - *governance/ownership*; (-) tools to monitor relevant actions that have been identified and by whom they are implemented, i.e. develop *accountability*.

These aspects of the implementation of an UNSCR 1325 Action Plan also contribute to a more comprehensive assessment of such an Agenda and highlight the limits of its implementation in terms of *lessons to be learned*.

Lessons learned

According to the evaluation report carried out in 2021, although the Programme was very well developed it "creates the impression of many actions, but without an expected result..." or "that the activities are implemented because the plan says so, without there being a real need or awareness of the problem", which reveals the lack of a systemic approach or vision in the implementation of the actions in the institutional action plans for the implementation of the Programme. Thus, it is clear that social roles and power relations also have an impact in the workplace, especially in a traditionally masculinised field. Using the systemic approach in carrying out actions allows structuring them for example from the perspective of unequal power structures, e.g. actions limited by visible power (e.g. existing policies, lack of will of decision-makers), invisible power (e.g. existing perceptions and stereotypes) and hidden power (e.g. as a positive factor - inter-institutional communication networks and with partners). Thus, a lesson to be learnt would be that the **rush to implement actions does not ensure that desired expectations are met – chaotic approach versus systemic approach.**

The lack of relevant studies that would indicate the reduction of stereotypes related to the role of women in the security sector at both institutional and national levels limits the understanding of the seriousness of discriminatory situations. Moreover, during the pandemic period and especially in the context of the vaccination process, the phenomenon of stigmatisation is highlighted with reference to people who do not want to be vaccinated for certain reasons. Although both male and female defence workers do not show an intention to be vaccinated, women are more often exposed to attacks. In fact, such discriminatory behaviour can be linked to abusive behaviour. A national study states that the most serious forms of sexual harassment in the workplace or at school are perpetrated by managers and co-workers, who display abusive behaviour with sexual overtones. One lesson learned is that the **combination of mismanagement and gender stereotyping limits the implementation of the Programme's actions.**

According to a nationally representative survey conducted by the Centre for Partnership and Development (CPD) in 2017, security and policing were perceived as masculinised sectors, particularly defence, due to existing stereotypes about women's capabilities and role in these sectors. Thus, the evaluation report highlighted that awareness-raising campaigns on UNSCR 1325 at local level and regular trainings on gender equality have contributed to the visibility of women in the sector at national level and even, as the TV and Radio debates showed, partly contributed to increasing the positive perception of women's involvement in the security sector. At the institutional level, perceptions of female employees in the sector have not changed significantly, except that the acceptance of gender mainstreaming has also been driven by the financial resources provided by donors for security sector reform. In this context, the lesson to be learned is that gender mainstreaming in the security and defence sector must be an ongoing process. Thus, the **promotion of the SGP Agenda also contributes to Security Sector Reform, i.e. security policies should incorporate aspects of the WPS Agenda.**

In the implementation process of the first Programme some actions were neglected as it was decided from the beginning that there were no opportunities for implementation, for example the introduction of flexible hours options for women and men parents within the system, as well as other measures that would allow men and women in the system to be more involved in family life. The legal regulations for adjusting working hours have not been used by all institutions in the security and defence sector (e.g. MA or MAI with its subdivisions). Thus, the lesson to be learned is that even if the national legislation provides for regulations on working time adjustment, **so not only solutions have to be identified, but they have to be correlated with the system or institutional specifics.**

This problem is also caused by the lack of the necessary infrastructure adapted to the needs of workers in the security and defence system (e.g. lack of rooms for breastfeeding, etc.). The studies find that in two institutions in particular, MAI and MA, the number of women and men who took maternity and paternity leave is quite low. Actually, childcare leave is not promoted and recommended among men in security and defence structures. Plus, even if some institutions claim that female employee-mothers have childcare breaks and can return from maternity leave within 2-3 months after childbirth, there is still no relevant data that would confirm that female employees request such facilities or prefer longer-term childcare leave.

The issue of harassment was and is a topic identified in both Programmes. The first programme has established an indicator to assess the problem by conducting an internal survey which should identify the % of security system employees who believe that their institution prevents and addresses cases of discrimination, harassment and violence in an effective way. Such surveys have been carried out in the Police.

Respectively, according to the survey conducted, it is found that even though there are certain normative acts, which provide for the obligation of some institutions to protect victims of sexual harassment, institutional and administrative measures do not provide a clear spectrum of actions and mechanism to ensure effective prevention/investigation and assistance measures, and when asked whether they believe that sexual harassment is present in the Police, 33% of respondents answered - yes, 52% - no and 15% - do not know.

However, regarding the presence of situations of indecent behaviour, women in the security and defence sector often opt for a lack of reaction, not trusting the effectiveness of reporting such actions or attaching little importance to such gestures. Thus, we note as a lesson to be learned that institutions with a higher organisational culture also have a higher rating on equal treatment in the workplace. And according to the interviews, it is argued that the attitude of subordinates depends on the attitude of management towards sexually abusive behaviour, especially in institutions with a more closed character. In addition, perception surveys among men are also welcome in order to have an integral image.

Some institutions have included in their short and medium term policies and strategies aspects of implementation of UNSCR 1325, for example the National Defence Strategy under Chapter IV Resources for Defence Implementation, states that "Gender mainstreaming in the country's security and defence policies will occur in accordance with the needs to supplement the national defence system with human resources, both in peacetime and in times of war/conflict..." in the hope that this will contribute to the implementation of the commitments undertaken by the Republic of Moldova on related Resolutions. Although there is a tendency to include gender issues from a systematic perspective, i.e. as a permanent objective of already existing public policies, there is a lesson to be learned here too - **if there is no synergy between the Programme's activities and those proposed in other documents on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and a reporting and monitoring channel, then the intentions mentioned in the related documents remain at the level of declarations.**

Partly as a result of budgetary challenges, gender units and, to a lesser extent, gender advisers, are often volunteers, which is good from a motivation point of view, but means that this activity loses out to other tasks and responsibilities. Plus, this work often goes unappreciated. The lesson to be learned in this context relates to the fact that **although there are examples of funding gender advisors and experts with external support, however, this support may fill gaps in the short term, but does not lead to institutionalisation of the responsibilities of implementing the WPS Agenda.** Similarly, subcontracting work through NGOs can help, but knowledge and ownership remains partly outside the institutions. In addition, this can lead to the outsourcing of tasks that should be the responsibility of the state to civil society.

According to the evaluation report carried out in summer 2021, it was identified that the cost-effectiveness analysis of the Programme is problematic as there is no relevant data available on the financial resources allocated and consumed in the implementation process. Moreover, the implementing institutions did not provide a budget for the implementation of the selected actions. Respectively, in the *Estimated costs and source of funding* section of the Programme Action Plan, *within the limits of the approved budget allocations*, which implies that no budget is foreseen for the implementation of the Programme, which is also a major challenge for a good number of states that have developed a UNSCR 1325 NAP. At the international level, only 27% of countries have a budget dedicated to the implementation of the WPS Agenda. Respectively, most of the financial support for the implementation of the Programme was due to donors/external assistance (such as UN Women in Moldova, Embassy of Sweden, UNDP Programme, US Embassy, etc.). It should be noted that only in the process of implementing the Programme, i.e. in the process of requesting the necessary support for mobilizing financial resources from donors, some institutions became aware of the ambition of the proposed activities that could be correlated not only with the intentions of achieving the Programme objectives, but also with the needs of cost-benefit assessment.

This experience led to the fact that a cost analysis was carried out for the recently adopted second Action Plan. The estimated cost of the Programme is 23 606, 9 thousand lei. The financing of the Programme will involve financial means from the state budget within the limit of the budget allocations approved by the annual budget law, as well as support from development partners

Coordination and monitoring are a separate challenge for the implementation of the first Programme, but also a **lesson to be learned** for the second Programme. Thus, the lead institution must be willing and able to effectively coordinate the breadth and diversity of implementing institutions. This includes not only the coordination of activities, but also the ability to set the cultural tone or philosophy for the implementation of the Programme, to have adequate experience across the *WPS Agenda*, for example, and to provide the necessary encouragement to agencies that cannot meet their obligations. Respectively such an institution did not exist in the implementation process of the Programme. We hope that the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which is responsible for the current Programme, with a majority female leadership, will be able to build on good practices and lessons learned.

In addition, the implementation of the Programme's objectives also contributes to increasing inter-ministerial cooperation with non-governmental organisations and civil society, thus ensuring the visibility of the actions carried out by these institutions on the implementation of UNSCR 1325. From an academic perspective, if we analyse the Programme, we can highlight that there is a synergy between the needs of the Republic of Moldova in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the four pillars mentioned. Although the pillars of UNSCR 1325 are often used to organize priority interventions and actions in national or sectoral action plans on the SPF Agenda, however, there is no homogeneous set of policy tools for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. As a rule, actors adjust to the four pillars according to the identified problems and priority areas.

Moreover, in the process of implementing the first Programme, the **need for localization of the WPS Agenda** was highlighted - promoting the visibility of the WPS Agenda content at the local level, including examining the needs for integrating the localization phenomenon into a Programme, ensuring synergy with the PCA. Localization of the WPS Agenda also calls for adjusting the indicators with the global ones from the perspective of UNSCR 1325 focused on justice and the reporting system. Plus, it calls for the involvement of NGOs and local partners as well as the media, but these actors also need to be trained to understand the sensitivity of the topic in order to promote it effectively.

Conclusions

For the most part, the lessons learned and good practices that have been highlighted above contain conclusions and recommendations with reference to the implementation process of UNSCR 1325 in Moldova. If we refer to the NAP, however, we cannot neglect that both the first and the second Programme are essential tools or even the only bridge between the national and the global level of implementation of UNSCR 1325. However, based on the lessons learned, the development of the second Programme should not be the only way to ensure continuity in the execution of the *WPS Agenda*. Implementation of UNSCR 1325 at national level could also be fostered through changes, amendments or adoption of new domestic legislation. For example, Israel's *Women's Rights Equality Law* included a mandate to have more women in peace negotiations, in line with commitments on the *WPS Agenda*.^[4] At the same time, the development of a NAP to implement UNSCR 1325 reinforces and strengthens the obligations of international law and, in particular, the role of **soft law** (codes of conduct, guidelines, communications, etc.) in promoting the human rights of women and girls in peace and conflict situations. Moreover, the term *soft law* is often used to describe various types of quasi-legal instruments of the Union, a term that is becoming topical for Moldova in the process of adjusting to the requirements of EU accession.

It should also be emphasised that ambitious plans do not necessarily translate into effective change unless they are developed in line with the national context, commitments, capacities and resources. Typically, results-oriented action is underpinned by political will, funding and commitment to change that addresses structural inequalities and exclusions in sustainable and impactful ways. This is why the observation that a well-written plan does not mean successful implementation is still valid. And the low level of women's participation in decision-making also impacts on the haphazard promotion of the *WPS Agenda*. Here we see that security sector structures claim that all positions are open to women, and it is their decision not to occupy certain hierarchical positions. However, within certain institutions there are invisible barriers, which through such an inexplicable action of the glass ceiling limit the promotion of women to senior positions. With this in mind, we should not neglect the fact that there is a danger that the adoption of the Programme on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 at national level will be limited to ticking off international commitments as fulfilled or to promoting the *WPS Agenda* as an effective tool in promoting the image of the National Army and Police.

[4]Florea N. Hudson National and Regional Implementation of Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security. UN Women Background Paper for Global Review Meeting, UN Women, New York, 5-7 November, 2013. http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/final_report_global_review_meeting_.pdf

Recommendation

Based on the above, we could propose some recommendations:

- The effective functioning of the inter-institutional platform for the implementation of the Programme with a concrete action plan on its work in phases, i.e. annually in order to ensure an integrated approach to actions, especially those that are sensitive or face the most barriers, to examine the needs for an action plan from a Strategic Communication perspective.
- Although gender steering groups exist in all government institutions according to the Gender Equality Strategy, it is nevertheless relevant for some institutions in the security sector, for example the Ministry of Defence, or even at government level to develop a sustainable mechanism to support the WPS Agenda, i.e. to have an advisor on security and GSP issues.
- At the level of ensuring a coordination and monitoring process, from past experience, it is necessary to institutionalise an explicit mechanism for the implementation of the Programme. In this respect, beyond the collection of quantitative data, it is important to collect quantitative indicators to assess the impact of the actions carried out, otherwise the Programme risks being judged to be for the sake of commitments but less in line with national security needs.
- At the same time, in terms of evaluation indicators, global indicators are increasingly popular because they bring together a range of complex information in a single source, and rankings by country or region can help to inform policy-making on more complex issues. This is why we could also recommend the use of global indicators as a way of assessing and comparing national progress not only against other countries, but also in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In addition, the Women, Peace and Security Global Index is a relevant tool in assessing the implementation process of UNSCR 1325, as it brings together three important dimensions of well-being: inclusion (economic, social, political); justice (formal laws and informal discrimination); and security of women and girls (at household (e.g. domestic violence), community and societal levels).
- Train other security sector structures such as the Parliamentary Committee on National Security and Public Order, the Supreme Security Council and the Office of Reintegration Policy in the implementation of the Programme.
- Continue cooperation with civil society in the implementation of the programme with reference to UNSCR 1325 and beyond. Here we take into account that, based on certain incidents that have taken place in the past with reference to discrimination or other gender issues, security sector institutions can seek advice from specialised organisations to prevent the situation they are facing from worsening on the gender or even human security dimension.
- More active training through programmes/projects of the media in promoting UNSCR 1325, perhaps by inviting them to participate in various trainings to understand the sensitivity of the topic and its effective promotion.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

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In the next chapter we explain the link between the principles of Good Security Sector Governance and the implementation of the Women Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, examine how Security Sector Governance (SSG) and Security Sector Reform (SSR) and defence are addressed in the WPS Agenda, and the role of strategic communication and civil society in the implementation of the WPS Agenda.

The 2030 Agenda [5] and the Sustainable Development Goals recognise that the rule of law, good governance and development are necessary foundations for peace and security. Indeed, good governance of the security sector and SSR play key roles as drivers of peace.

Good governance of the security sector is at the heart of achieving the WPS Agenda and increasing women's empowerment and participation in security and justice institutions and decision-making processes, including by protecting women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence, thus contributing to women's full empowerment and equal participation alongside men. It plays a key role in achieving the goals of conflict prevention and sustainable peace. Accordingly, the international community and national decision-makers should have a common approach that mutually reinforces the SPF and security sector governance in both policy and sector strategies, implementation processes and structures, and monitoring and oversight [6].

According to the study "Security Sector Governance, Security Sector Reform and the Gender Dimension" good SSR is the application of good governance principles within a state's security and justice sector. This implies that security, defence and justice sector institutions deliver security and justice services as a public good, through transparent policies and practices, and within a framework of democratic governance that respects human rights and the rule of law.

Thus, in order to have an inclusive security sector, it is necessary to take into account the needs of all social categories, without discrimination, and in this sense, gender equality is a central element of the principles of good SSR. The security sector must be: accountable for respecting the different needs of all groups; *transparent* - information must be available and accessible to those who will be affected by decisions and their implementation. The *rule of law* must also be respected: all persons and institutions, including the state, are subject to public laws, applied impartially and consistently in accordance with international and national norms and standards; everyone in every social environment has the

[5]Fast Facts – What is Sustainable Development?. https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2023/08/what-is-sustainable-development/?gclid=CjwKCAiAmsurBhBvEiwA6e-WPK1woDEy9DDLShzVGkqQihDFwpPP15hR6u2Rn_QmVK3MDIB7vnL1VRoCdZ0QAvD_BwE

[6]A Security Sector Governance Approach to Women, Peace and Security. https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/c/440855_0.pdf

the opportunity to participation in decision-making and the provision of services in a free, fair and inclusive manner, either directly or through legitimate representative institutions; institutions must be *responsive* to the different security needs of all sections of the population and carry out their missions in a non-discriminatory, efficient and effective manner. The rule of law requires the security and justice sector to actively apply a gender perspective and promote gender equality. Adherence to these principles is part of the state's primary obligation to achieve gender equality through equal access to opportunities and resources for women, men and those of other gender identities. In particular, we refer to achieving responsiveness, effectiveness, participation, impartiality and compliance with human rights standards embedded in the rule of law, which requires the security and justice sector to actively apply a gender perspective in order to promote gender equality [7]. The inclusion of a gender perspective and equitable participation in the security sector is an important component of SSR. A security sector that is based on human security takes into account the different needs of women, men, boys and girls and ensures that women's equal participation meets the needs of the population in order to establish a safer and more peaceful society.

Gender mainstreaming in the security sector is essential because:

- 1. universal human rights principles must be respected;***
- 2. where both men and women are involved, there are better results;***
- 3. the inclusion of women enhances operational effectiveness, providing the experience, knowledge and interests of women and men in various operations.***

In a democratic state, the armed forces, the police and other security sector structures have the role of protecting and defending its fundamental values, such as citizenship and equality. A more balanced gender composition fosters cohesion and effectiveness in multidimensional peace operations. In the presence of hybrid threats, the defence sector must deal with sexual and gender-based violence, gender, massive human rights violations, humanitarian crises, epidemics, sexual abuse, etc.

The benefits of representative security (which includes geographic, gender, religious and ethnic principles) relate to providing security that responds to diverse needs and improves citizens' trust and local ownership.

Generally, opening up positions to women allows access to additional human resources and the opportunity to select qualified staff. By taking gender into account at an early stage of policy development, a solid basis is created for a process of security sector reform that responds to gender issues and diverse security needs.

Mainstreaming gender equality in the objectives and priorities of defence reform ensures a better ability to respond to different security and defence needs in society, improves operational effectiveness and creates a more representative defence force.

[7]Henri Myrntinen. Guvernanța sectorului de securitate, reforma sectorului de securitate și dimensiunea de gen.
https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/GSToolkit_Tool-1_Romanian.pdf

In this context, if gender is included in strategic documents, changes will take place at all institutional levels, as the functioning of the institutions involves the participation of both the decision-makers within them and all their subdivisions.

Although the development of laws and policies reflecting gender equality is not sufficient in itself, it is a necessary precondition for initiating and triggering change at the operational and practical levels.

While the executive and parliament have primary responsibility in this regard, independent watchdogs, such as women's organisations and other civil society groups, can also play an important role in promoting policy and legislative change through their advocacy efforts.

Mainstreaming gender equality in sectoral reforms refers to: including gender equality as a fundamental objective in sectoral reforms, such as reform of the armed forces, police, justice sector and border management, ensuring that institutions effectively respond to the needs of the whole population, including women, men, girls and boys, regardless of social background, ethnic origin, religion or place of residence, and strengthening good governance mechanisms at national and local levels. It will also contribute to increasing the representativeness of the institutions by ensuring equal opportunities for all staff, including men, women and under-represented groups, and by combating all forms of discrimination. It is necessary to include gender equality as a basic principle in all continuous and basic training courses and to integrate gender issues in the evaluation of SSR.

Security policies and gender mainstreaming

Policy-making process: In terms of process, United Nations Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) calls for the full and equal participation of women in policy-making at all levels and for gender mainstreaming.

The participation of both men and women in security policy-making is essential for comprehensive policy-making in assessing security threats and understanding security providers. The inclusion of women's views in national security policy-making can lead to the recognition of women's specific approaches to security.

Addressing the specific needs and contributions of women and girls in policy making: the UNSCR emphasises that security policies should include strategies that address the needs, security and justice priorities and empowerment of women and girls.



Promoting equal participation of men and women is a key strategy for mainstreaming gender considerations in security sector reform and security institutions

Defence reform involves transforming a state's defence sector so that institutions: are under civilian control; the principles of accountability and good governance are respected; maintain a strength commensurate with their mission; there is a representative component; international law is respected; and a substantial contribution is made to achieving national and international peace and security objectives.

RESOLUTIONS ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY SET OUT A NUMBER OF SPECIFIC OBLIGATIONS AS WELL AS GUIDELINES FOR DEFENCE REFORM PROCESSES:

- representation of women at decision-making level in defence institutions;
- gender-sensitive Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programmes;
- vetting of armed and security services to address sexual violence and other violations of international humanitarian law and human rights.

THE PEACE AND SECURITY RESOLUTIONS SET OUT A SERIES OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR THE STRENGTHENING AND PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN SSR PROCESSES BY:

- Increasing full and equal representation, participation of women in SSR discussions and security decision-making.
- Strengthening women's capacity for public involvement in decision-making.
- Take measures to involve women in the implementation of peace agreements and support women's peace initiatives.

Security Sector Reform and UNSCR 1325

The links between security sector reform and UNSCR 1325 are numerous. SSR aims to strengthen the effectiveness of the security institution and promote democracy, transparency and accountability, and the resolution promotes women as important actors for sustainable peace and security. The security of a nation requires both women's and men's skills to be used to create, define and maintain that security.


Over the last decade, there has been a significant increase in awareness and attention to gender issues and the role of women in the security and justice sector. Globally, the gender balance of many institutions in the sector has improved. Women have assumed more senior positions and external and internal oversight mechanisms have been strengthened to combat gender-based discrimination, harassment, exploitation, and abuse. As a result of these measures, security sector institutions have become more inclusive and representative, and more capable of fulfilling their mandated task of promoting gender equality.

However, as a number of global analytical studies around the world attest, there are still major challenges in achieving gender equality and overcoming gender discrimination, both in the security sector and in society. Measures to encourage women's access, participation and involvement in security services often remain tokenistic, failing to bring about real change.

In conclusion we could see that Good Security Sector Governance is about providing security for all equally, while Security Sector Reform aims to help the security sector understand the diverse needs of the people and meet them as part of providing, managing and overseeing security.

Mainstreaming a gender perspective into security and justice management and oversight makes the gender aspects of security provision visible and it is necessary that funding, budgeting, logistics, human resources, legal and policy frameworks, operational decision-making and other management issues that support security provision actively strive to promote gender equality.


The challenge of European integration and the implementation of the WPS Agenda

 An important argument for the effective implementation of the WPS Agenda is also the alignment not only with good governance of the security sector, but also with the national interest of European integration and alignment with EU standards and best practices.

Gender equality and human rights are part of the core of universal values and are priorities in their own right integrated into all EU policies. Moldova's accession process to the European Union includes the condition of alignment with European standards, including in this area.

The EU gender equality strategy is in line with the Von der Leyen Commission's commitment to achieving an equal Union. By 2025, Europe could come a long way towards becoming a continent where women are equal to men. The idea is that all Europeans - women or men, girls or boys - should enjoy the freedom to follow their own path, have equal opportunities to prosper, be equal members of society and become leaders if they deserve it.

The key objectives are: ending violence against women; combating gender stereotypes; eliminating gender disparities in the labour market; ensuring equal participation of women and men in different sectors of the economy; eliminating the gender pay gap and gender gaps in pensions; eliminating gender gaps in family responsibilities and achieving gender balance in decision-making and politics. The strategy follows a twin-track approach: gender mainstreaming in all other policies combined with specific actions. Intersectionality is the horizontal principle for its implementation. *Although the strategy focuses on actions within the EU, it is also coherent with the EU's external policy on gender equality and women's empowerment [8].*

 Security Council Resolution 1325 - is one of the focus areas of the latest European Union (EU) Gender Equality Action Plan (GAP III). The inclusion of women, peace and security as a thematic area in its own right is expected to enable a more holistic EU approach to gender equality and complement the efforts of some EU Member States that have adopted feminist external policies.[9]

The importance of Strategic Communication in the successful implementation of the WPS Agenda

Communicating and explaining the purpose of activities and decisions taken is the obligation of democratic governments and is an indicator of good governance. The purpose of this communication is to gain competence and credibility in establishing the legitimacy of the importance of long-term decisions and overcoming obstacles in the process of security sector reform. In recent years, recognising the value of effective communication, an increasing number of communication activities have been designed and integrated into various society-based and society-oriented development

[8]Către egalitatea de gen. https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_ro

[9]Howthewomen, peaceandsecurity agenda isintegratedintotheEU'sgenderaction plan.

efforts. These are unsystematic and tend to focus more on conveying information than on establishing mechanisms for effective feedback, explanation and engagement with audiences. As a result, citizens' interest and knowledge of security issues and decisions, including women's involvement in peace and security processes, is low. The lack of interest in security and defence issues is interlinked with the lack of awareness at government level of the value of strategic communication on security and gender issues.

Just as strategic communication is geared towards "winning hearts and brains" and influencing behaviour, one of the main goals is to contribute to the positive image of the security sector, counter stereotypes and gain support for the actions taken by the institutions, including on gender issues.

Strategic communication (StratCom) can contribute to the success of public policy and strategy actions, it can ensure that policy/project actions are realistic, appropriate to the security and information environment, cultural, social and political conditions, effective perceptions, through awareness and understanding between strategy/programme members/partners and beneficiaries.

At the national level, StratCom has two goals and values. On the one hand, to strengthen citizens in a sustainable and strategic way, as a platform for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 National Implementation Plan. At the same time, it can strengthen cooperation and cohesion in achieving strategic goals at governmental and societal level. Thus, there is a need to promote the importance of engaging and interacting with men, to address conservative and patriarchal issues, and institutional socio-political constraints, which constitute one of the major obstacles to a full implementation process of the SPF Agenda.

Fostering strategic engagement between governments and local women's rights organisations and networks that form the backbone for advancing the WPS agenda is also key to promoting women's political commitment and participation.



In addition, there is a need to depoliticise the WPS Agenda, which was conceived primarily as a feminist political project. This means adopting a transformative approach that puts gender equality and the equal participation of men and women in leadership positions back at the centre of the agenda; explaining the importance of the SPF Agenda for democratic governance of the security sector; mainstreaming it into security policy and raising awareness of societal change.

At the institutional level (ministries, armed forces and police), StratCom is an organisational development strategy tool that answers questions such as "why do we need women in the armed forces", "how women and men contribute together in the security sector", "how is human security provided by the Ministry of Interior", "how the Agenda will raise awareness of the importance of the involvement of both women and men", "what are the benefits of women's participation in the peace-keeping process", "how do we encourage women to engage in police bodies, armed forces, internal affairs, peace-keeping missions including/especially in decision-making positions" etc.

In this respect, it is very important to promote and raise awareness of the WPS agenda on a regular and diverse basis and to identify more impactful ways to address existing stereotypes. It is also necessary to promote research on topics tangential to the gender dimension in the security sector.

Institutions implementing national defence policy should consider lessons learned and best practices in the area of training and capacity building for gender mainstreaming. The experiences shared by male champions and female role models are particularly useful in promoting change in society. Finally, institutions and civil society in the sector should regularly research the perceptions of women and men in the sector to gain a better and more up-to-date understanding of the subject. The information resulting from this research should serve as a basis for action plans, policies and other activities.



We consider it necessary to develop a strategic communication concept to promote the involvement of the WPS Agenda, which will approach communication in a strategic way, promoting not only the objectives and results of the Programme, but also the importance of the impact on the role of women and girls within the security and defence sector.

All actions will aim to raise awareness and sensitise the target audience on the importance, benefits and necessity of working together to create an inclusive, participatory, and women-friendly security and defence sector. At the same time, there is a need to work with civil society organisations to develop this strategic communication concept, focusing on the role of women as "agents of change" and not simply as victims.

As political will is a key factor for implementation, there is still a need to encourage policy makers to support this agenda by avoiding the "glass ceiling" phenomenon. While recognising that it takes time and effort to change perceptions and behaviour (particularly in defence institutions), there are some immediate actions that could provide a basic understanding of gender mainstreaming in the security sector.

Plus, it is essential to address patriarchal gender, cultural norms, and institutional socio-political constraints, which are a major obstacle to full implementation of the WPS Agenda, marginalising women's voices and suppressing equal participation in decision-making processes, which have always been at the heart of the difficulties in implementing UNSCR 1325.

Social norms institutionalise male privilege and traditionally in power structures within national governments. The issue is particularly powerful for promoting the participation pillar of the WPS Agenda at the national level.

Indeed, the extent to which the government, WPS activist groups and women's civil society organisations will succeed in promoting the implementation of WPS depends on, among other things, whether the state and its bureaucracies are willing and able to impose changes in the culture and practices of its bureaucracy.

The role of civil society in the implementation of the WPS Agenda

Civil society organisations (CSOs) around the world are working to strengthen peace and equality in communities at national and international levels. CSOs and women's NGOs play a critical role in achieving change and commitments to women, peace and security (WPS). They implement conflict resolutions; strive to make decision-making inclusive; document; organise; and differentiate between those involved in conflict according to need.

The vital role of civil society, especially women's civil society organisations (CSOs), is important but often unrecognised, marginalised and undervalued. The significant work of women's CSOs in conflict situations is all the more extraordinary as they are often excluded from formal conflict resolution processes, political dialogue and post-conflict peace-building systems, including mechanisms and institutions responsible for the implementation of peace agreements and post-conflict planning processes. As various reports on the implementation and success of UNSCR 1325 have highlighted, civil society organisations are one of the most important arenas for women to empower and engage in peace actions, so as to strengthen the path from war to peace.

In fact, as a sphere outside the strictly political (governmental) and economic realm, as well as beyond the family, civil society has always been a vital sphere for women to organize and participate in community or city life.

Many attribute to CSOs the ability to better understand the realities on the ground, to mobilise each other's resources and expertise, and to put pressure on the international community to hold their government accountable and legitimise their organisation's mission.

Civil society oversight of the security sector that supports gender mainstreaming aims to:

- ***reflecting the different needs, views and security priorities of women and men, boys and girls;***
- ***the inclusion of women and men and women's organisations in monitoring processes;***
- ***monitoring how security sector institutions address gender-based violence;***
- ***holding security sector institutions accountable for discrimination and human rights violations;***
- ***advocating for equal participation of men and women in security sector institutions;***

promoting the implementation of laws, instruments and rules and regional instruments and standards on gender equality and security, such as Beijing Platform for Action and UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 Security Council.

Studies have shown that an effective national defence policy relies heavily on a strong role and partnership with civil society actors. Successful implementation of UNSCR 1325 is inextricably linked to support for local women's rights organisations, women's associations, peace-building organisations. Moreover, the National Programme for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security [10] provides for the involvement of civil society. This National Programme is also a viable prerequisite for the creation of a civil society consultation platform for institutions and the initiation of partnerships with women's rights organisations.

At the same time, even though there is collaboration between some women's associations and security organisations and cooperation memoranda have been signed with the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the purpose of promoting WPS, there is still a major gap for such collaboration for several reasons. Mainly, civil society organisations do not have sufficient knowledge about the security and defence sectors, and because civil society focuses more on gender equality. Thus, the basic need is to broaden the understanding of the mission of the security sector. This process can be facilitated by a group of representatives of civil society, academia and state institutions interested in getting involved in the promotion of WPS - related topics and who were/are part of the working groups for drafting and implementing the NAP.

A successful example could be the role of civil society in the development and implementation of the first Programme (2018-2021) [11], which facilitated dialogue between government institutions and donors, allowing the creation of a platform for inter-institutional communication and dialogue between the governmental and voluntary sectors, and the exchange of expertise and transmission of knowledge through information and awareness-raising among institutions. Likewise, civil society organisations of the sector have been actively involved in lobbying and advocacy for the implementation of the NAP, developing materials to support capacity building for the implementation of UNSCR 1325, education and training on the topics of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, involvement in the implementation of certain actions of the NAP, development of studies, thematic guides, guidelines, etc., monitoring and follow-up of the implementation of the plan at national and institutional levels.

It is still important to support women's organisations, advocates and women's rights defenders in a range of activities related to WPS. Support must be political, technical and financial. This must include supporting and ensuring the participation of women in civil society in peace processes, in all aspects of the reconstruction of judicial, security and political institutions.

[10] HOTĂRÂRE Nr. 152 din 22-03-2023 pentru aprobarea Programului național de implementare a Rezoluției 1325 a Consiliului de Securitate al ONU privind femeile, pacea și securitatea pentru anii 2023-2027. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=136728&lang=ro

[11] Programul național de implementare a Rezoluției 1325 a Consiliului de Securitate al ONU privind Femeile, Pacea și Securitatea pentru anii 2018-2021 și Planul de acțiuni cu privire la punerea în aplicare a acestuia. <http://lex.justice.md/md/374810>

Conclusions

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 promotes women as important actors for sustainable peace and security. Although the last decade has seen a significant increase in awareness and attention to gender issues and the role of women in the security and justice sector, analytical studies around the world have shown that major challenges remain in achieving gender equality and overcoming gender discrimination, both in the security sector and in society. Gender mainstreaming in the security sector is essential and is in line with universal human rights and Good Governance principles of the security sector.

Representative security has a multitude of benefits. In a democratic state, it provides security that responds to diverse needs and improves citizens' trust in state institutions.

Gender mainstreaming in the security sector is essential and is in line with universal human rights and Good Governance principles of the security sector.

Developing laws and policies that reflect gender equality is not sufficient. Their implementation and the promotion of equal participation of men and women should be a priority in the process of Moldova's accession to the European Union, as gender equality and human rights are at the core of universal values and are priorities in their own right within the EU. Moldova's accession process to the European Union also includes the condition of alignment with European standards, including in this area.

Strategic communication is one of the ways in which the WPS Agenda can be promoted and raised awareness in society. It can empower citizens in a sustainable and strategic way and strengthen cooperation and cohesion in achieving strategic goals at governmental and societal level. The WPS agenda needs to be promoted in a systemic and diverse way and many ways of impact identified to address existing stereotypes.

Although civil society organisations, women-led organisations, women human rights defenders and women peacebuilders play a vital role in achieving change and the commitments of the SDG Agenda, their role is often unrecognised, marginalised and undervalued.

An example confirming the important role of civil society in this field is the implementation of the first Programme (2018-2021) [12] in the Republic of Moldova. Civil society facilitated the dialogue between governmental institutions and donors, which allowed the creation of a platform for inter-institutional communication and dialogue between the governmental and associative sectors, achieving an exchange of expertise and transmission of knowledge through information and awareness-raising of institutions.

[12] Programul național de implementare a Rezoluției 1325 a Consiliului de Securitate al ONU privind Femeile, Pacea și Securitatea pentru anii 2018-2021 și Planul de acțiuni cu privire la punerea în aplicare a acestuia. <http://lex.justice.md/md/374810>

Recommendations

- Developing civil society capacities to engage and influence security policies. Increase the number of women security experts, provide more opportunities to increase the number of women in the voluntary sector.
- Support local associations, which are essential for the implementation of an WPS Calendar and on the ground.
- Recognition that the successful implementation of UNSCR 1325 is inextricably linked to support for local women's rights organisations, women's associations, peace-building organisations.
- Ensure the inclusion of women and civil society organisations in monitoring processes. They are important as a source of information and their presence will increase transparency and accountability of monitoring. In this respect, it is important that t h e NAP monitoring group includes representatives from both government and women's and civil society organisations.
- Prioritise the provision of technical assistance and capacity building to local women's organisations committed to implementing UNSCR 1325. This should also involve facilitating partnerships and exchange opportunities between women's organisations and international networks committed to advancing the WPS agenda.
- Establish an explicit, clear, flexible, long-term and affordable commitment to increase funding for women's organisations in the field of WPS. Access to flexible and stable funding is a key mediating factor in maintaining the dynamic strength of women, especially during crisis management.
- Prioritise projects that would strengthen collaboration between networks and organisations, as individual approaches increase competition. Funding models need to strengthen collaborative skills within women's organisations, mobilising funds in ways that harmonise diverse local initiatives and emphasise the benefits of the consortium.
- We consider it necessary to develop a strategic communication concept for the promotion of the SPF Agenda, which will approach communication in a strategic way, promoting not only the objectives and results of the Programme, but also the importance of the impact on the role of women and girls in the security and defence sector. Within this concept the focus should be on the role of women as "agents of change" and not simply as victims. All actions will aim to raise awareness and sensitise the target audience on the importance and necessity of working together to create an inclusive, participatory and women-friendly security and defence sector.

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