

U.S. Civil Society Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security

10 Recommended Action Points in the First 150 Days

With the release of the U.S. National Action Plan (U.S. NAP) on Women, Peace and Security and President Obama's signed Executive Order on making the NAP official U.S. policy on December 19, 2012, the U.S. government has placed the force of law behind its efforts to promote these goals. As a diverse coalition of organizations working on women, peace and security issues, the U.S. Civil Society Working Group is uniquely positioned to assist U.S. government actors in implementing the U.S. NAP. On February 15, 2011 wrote a memorandum providing guidance for the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. This memorandum was expanded in November of 2011 with the publication of the *U.S. Civil Society Working Group Expert Statement for the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security*. This expert statement aimed to assist the U.S. Government in turning declaratory policy into action and engender effective outcomes that bring peace, security and dignity to the lives of women and men in conflict and crisis settings.

Drawing on its combined breadth of knowledge and expertise, the U.S. Civil Society Working Group proposes the following recommended actions to be taken in the first one hundred days of the U.S. NAP. These recommendations laid out in the five pillars of the U.S. NAP, highlight the importance of regular consultations and constructive dialogue between civil society and the USG. Building a structure for a strong working relationship between these communities of practice will enable effective leveraging of available resources toward the plan's objectives. The U.S. Civil Society Working Group, through these recommendations, hopes to develop structure for implementation, contribute to a strong and positive impact for the U.S. NAP in these crucial initial days as the implementation plans are developed, and for the longer term as the plans are implemented. Civil society can offer expertise for the next phase, and those in the field can offer assistance with implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation to assess the impact of the U.S NAP.

Specifically, the US Civil Society Working Group offers its cooperation as the interagency council is established and as communication systems are put in place for sustained cooperation.

10 Action Points for First 150 Days

Pillar One: National Integration and Institutionalization

1. Formalize a consultation process, in coordination with the U.S. Civil Society Working Group, to inform the development of women, peace, and security guidance that will be incorporated into the annual Mission Strategic Resource Plans (MSRPs) and Bureau Strategic and Resource Plans (BSRPs)—or their successor vehicles, pursuant to the new, revised strategic planning framework.

2. Establish and facilitate a consultative process designed to provide missions and bureaus of relevant U.S. government agencies access to input, recommendations, and feedback from civil society to inform the development of the annual budget and long-term strategic planning. The Department of State's Office of the Director of Foreign Assistance, USAID's Office of Policy, Planning, and Learning, and the Department of Defense's Office for the Rule of Law and Detainee Policy are well-positioned to lead this effort.

Pillar Two: Participation in Peace Processes and Decision-making

3. Ensure inclusion of women representatives sufficient in number, experience, and influence to participate meaningfully in the ongoing peace negotiations in Afghanistan and between Sudan-South Sudan. To facilitate this, the U.S. should exert its diplomatic influence and work with international partners to provide sufficient material, logistical, and technical support for women's participation.
4. Require gender-focused assessments prior to the design of new, relevant programmatic interventions—such as those in support of transitional justice and accountability processes, security sector reform, countering violent extremism, and political transitions. Assessments should require consultations with civil society organizations, particularly those that are woman-led, to incorporate the perspectives of women in building the resulting programs and projects, including the development of monitoring and evaluation frameworks that measure gendered impact. These assessments should take place before Requests for Proposals, Statements of Objectives, and/or Statements of Work are drafted.

Pillar Three: Protection from Violence

5. Convene a special meeting of the Presidential Initiatives—Feed the Future, PEPFAR, Global Health Initiative, among others—to determine how to further integrate prevention of gender-based violence into their respective programs as a cross-cutting issue at and beyond the mission level.
6. Initiate an immediate “Zero Tolerance of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (SEA)” policy with regards to actions perpetrated by U.S. government employees, U.S. military, and contractors in all places where the U.S. has government personnel, military, and contractors deployed. The policy must include abuse within the U.S. military itself.

Pillar Four: Conflict Prevention

7. Initiate a full review and comparison of existing conflict assessment methodologies and tools to determine effective and relevant gender-sensitive indicators, and means of analyzing data collected that ensure broad participation of civil society. Based on the review, launch three to five pilot gendered conflict early warning/response analysis/assessments projects, taking into account different contexts; for example, consider Kenya (potential election violence), Iran (impact of sanctions and threat of war), Central Asia (instability and crisis of governance), and Afghanistan (impact and implications of U.S. troop withdrawal).
8. Policies and programming in countries affected by the Arab awakening should incorporate a gender perspective up front and be attentive to early warning indications of repressive measures

and actions against women in these countries imposed by extremist Islamist groups. Ensure effective support for national women's movements in affected countries.

Pillar 5: Access to Relief and Recovery

9. Include more detailed language on adherence to relevant Sphere Project and Inter-Agency Standing Committee Principles on protection and gender, including gender-based violence, in all relevant U.S. government Guidance for Proposals. Develop associated staffing plans to strengthen these federal agencies' capacity on protection and gender issues in order to evaluate proposals against such guidance and monitor implementation and impact.
10. Intensify U.S. engagement with government partners, U.N. agencies, and civil society to ensure much better protection for women and girls, with a particular focus on the Horn of Africa in Mogadishu, the Daddab refugee complex and outlying areas, and the Dollo Ado camp in Ethiopia.

Conclusion and Looking Forward

The U.S. Civil Society Working Group welcomes the launch of the U.S. NAP and the Executive Order instituting it, and we applaud the Administration's selection of the five pillars with heavy emphasis on fostering an inclusive and effective dialogue to guide implementation and national integration of the spirit of the policy. We look forward to supporting the successful implementation of the Plan and propose the following next steps regarding our collaboration in this important effort:

- Section 3.b.i of the Executive Order states the designation of one or more officers as responsible for coordinating and implementing the U.S. NAP. In the next 150 days (as per the EO), the U.S. government will publish and make available an organizational chart listing the names, positions, contact information, and the level and areas of responsibilities of such designated officers. Such identification helps civil society members be more strategic in their ability to offer assistance. *In accordance with the principles of transparency and accountability, the U.S. Civil Society Working Group will raise public awareness of the structure established and its membership.*
- Section 3.b.ii. of the EO states that, within 150 days of the release of the U.S. NAP, agency-specific implementation plans will be submitted to the Assistant to the President and the National Security Advisor. Agency-specific implementation plans should include line item budgets and the timeframe for the funding. They should also indicate whether the activities are part of existing programs and budgets or if there are new funds available to address the outlined actions. *The U.S. Civil Society Working Group should review and provide comment on the plan 60 days before submission to the Assistant to the President and the National Security Advisor.*
- Section 3.b.iii. of the EO states that agencies will execute and monitor their plans and report on them to the Assistant to the President and the National Security Advisor. The U.S. government will outline a concrete process for this, including a multi-disciplinary oversight body that includes significant representation from civil society, federal, and executive agencies. *The monitoring and reporting documents should be made available to the U.S. Civil Society Working Group for periodic review, monitoring, and feedback.*
- Section 4.c of the EO states that there will be a periodic review of the U.S. NAP and that a first review will take place in 2015; the Plan states review will be conducted annually and that civil

society will be empowered to contribute to this process. *The U.S. government should clarify the timeline and benchmarks for this process as well as the individuals responsible for evaluating progress, and arrange for ongoing meetings and open lines of communication for civil society's input into the evaluation process.*

These steps will help to institutionalize collaboration between the interagency and civil society, foster successful implementation of the U.S. NAP, and advance American foreign policy goals. We look forward to working together to ensure this policy has the envisioned impact of fostering more just, inclusive, and sustainable peace for all women, men, boys, and girls around the world.