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Implementing the “Women, Peace and Security” agenda in Brazil:

an assessment of the National Action Plan

Paula Drumond and Tamya Rebelo



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Implementing the “Women, Peace and Security” agenda in Brazil:

an assessment of the National Action Plan

Paula Drumond and Tamyá Rebelo¹

Abstract

This article analyzes the two-year Brazilian National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace, and Security, adopted on March 8th, 2017. The document was a response of Brazil to the United Nations’ call on member states to develop national strategies for the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000). Our work aims to highlight the main points of the NAP, as well as its limitations in terms of content and implementation strategies. It also presents some recommendations with the purpose of promoting critical reflection and informing decision-making on the possibility of a review of the NAP.

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Introduction

Brazil aligns itself with an understanding, which is established at the United Nations and repeatedly proven by scientific evidence, that peace is better built and becomes more sustainable when women are engaged in all spheres of conflict prevention and resolution, as well as during efforts to maintain and build peace. It is fundamental that women are included in these processes, not only as victims of violence, but, mainly, as agents of change and partners in equal standing to men.²

The National Action Plan (NAP), adopted by the Brazilian government on March 8th, 2017, symbolizes the country’s normative commitment with the United Nations (UN) agenda on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). This article reviews the main points of this public policy, paying special attention to its limitations in terms of content and implementation strategies. It also underlines specific recommendations with the purpose of encouraging a constructive engagement with government actors, military and diplomatic personnel, as well as national and international bodies involved with the implementation of the NAP in Brazil. In analyzing Brazil’s efforts to implement the WPS agenda, we aim to instigate public debates through critical reflections that may potentially refine and improve future versions of the plan.

The article proceeds as follows. After this brief introduction, we highlight the main points of the Brazilian NAP, situating it both in terms of the evolution of the domestic debates and the normative and programmatic frameworks of the WPS agenda established internationally. The following sections evaluate the content of the document, indicating areas of progress and remaining challenges. The article then moves on to instigate a critical engagement with the document, questioning its exclusive focus on defense and foreign policy and the ensuing neglect of other WPS dimensions at the domestic level. The final section is dedicated to our conclusions. We argue that the effective implementation of the WPS agenda in Brazil depends on specific measures that should be included in a revised version of the plan. Our main recommendations include:

- Allocation of a dedicated budget to the implementation of the NAP;
- Elaboration of a monitoring and evaluation framework that clearly defines responsibilities and assigns specific targets, indicators and, deadlines for key activities;
- Comprehensive and effective inclusion of the Brazilian civil society both in the implementation of the NAP and in an eventual revision of the plan;
- Adoption of an intersectional security perspective, which is sensitive to the overlapping of gender and other identity categories such as race, class and sexual orientation, and the particularities of local, regional and international contexts;
- Acknowledgement of critical issues for the security of women and girls in Latin America in general, and in Brazil, in particular, including (i) the gendered impacts of illegal trade of small arms and disarmament; and (ii) international human trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and men, regardless of age, sexual orientation and gender identity.

² Nacional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security [NAP], 2017.

2. The Brazilian NAP: main points

The NAP is a reference point in analyzing the Brazilian government's efforts to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000). It explicitly recognizes the distinct impacts of armed conflicts on women and girls, and reaffirms the important role played by women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and peacebuilding efforts. The document also highlights that women must participate on equal terms with men in all measures for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

Based on these premises, Brazil's NAP is structured around four key areas:

- (i) **Participation** of women, including Brazilian and members of the local civilian population, in all activities related to peace and security;
- (ii) **Prevention** of violence against women and girls **and protection** of their human rights before, during, and after armed conflicts;
- (iii) **Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Cooperation**, aiming at mainstreaming gender perspectives in relief and recovery; and
- (iv) **Awareness-raising and engagement** to enhance public awareness and involve civil society actors in the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Closely aligned with the four pillars of the WPS agenda, the NAP puts forward two central strategic objectives: gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women and girls as agents of peace. By including gender mainstreaming as a guiding principle of political and decision-making processes, the Brazilian NAP takes into account both women's and men's interests, experiences and concerns in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs. This approach informs a more thorough understanding of gender relations in societies, as well as the elaboration of innovative and inclusive projects in the search for sustainable peace. Furthermore, the NAP recognizes that women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution increases the sustainability of peace and, therefore, women should be included in peacekeeping and peacebuilding initiatives not only as victims of violence but, mainly, as agents of change and partners in equal standing to men.

By adopting the NAP, Brazil has formally decided to strengthen existing policies and standards to promote women's empowerment and to put an end to all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination. The first part of the plan acknowledges gender public policies already in place at the domestic level, including the creation of the first specialized Women's Police Station, the Special Secretariat of Policies for Women (SPW), the National Plans of Policies for Women (NPPWs), and the Maria da Penha Law. The examples demonstrate past efforts being pushed forward by the Brazilian government to advance its normative commitments towards the promotion of gender equality. The document also acknowledges Brazil's pre-NAP engagements with the WPS agenda in peace and security initiatives. These include, for instance, actions to expand the participation of civilian and military women in the Brazilian armed forces and peacekeeping operations, as determined by the 2012-2015 Multi-year Plan.³

³ NAP, 2017.

Another highlight of the NAP is the advance in gender mainstreaming in the Brazilian diplomatic agenda for cooperation projects. In Haiti, for instance, Brazil worked alongside OXFAM and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in capacity building initiatives for service provision and legislative reforms on gender-based violence (GBV). The Brazilian government invested one million dollars in rehabilitation projects for victims of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in addition to training health personnel working with GBV survivors in Guinea-Bissau⁴.



Brazilian peacekeepers in activities of the Brazilian MINUSTAH (United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti) Battalion.
Image via Defense Ministry. Flickr.

Although the NAP demonstrates Brazil’s normative commitment to gender equality, limitations in terms of content and implementation strategies persist, therefore hindering effective attainment of its goals. The next section undertakes a general assessment of the document. It is divided into four main parts: (3.1) elaboration process, (3.2) structure, (3.3) content, and (3.4) implementation strategies. Each section contains an illustrative table that provides the reader with an overview of the advances and limits related to these four components.

⁴ Telegram 00879 from SERE to BRASEMB SANTIAGO, 2014.

3. Advances and Limits of the Brazilian NAP

3.1. Elaboration process

The elaboration and drafting processes of Brazil's NAP were conducted by an interinstitutional working group (WG) comprised of officials from the main ministries related to the peace and security agenda (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Justice and Public Security, and Ministry of Human Rights), in addition to UN Women and a representative of the local civil society – Igarapé Institute.

The creation of an intersectoral WG allowed different bodies to interact, exchange information and engage with debates around the WPS agenda. It also enabled joint reflections about each entity's operating area and specific demands⁵. However, as the political environment changed in Brazil, so did the engagement of some of these institutions. For example, during the drafting process, the Special Secretariat of Policies for Women ceased to exist and became part of the Ministry of Human Rights. The Ministry of Justice had three different ministers in this short period and, more importantly, Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff was impeached and removed from office in 2016. The troubled political context affected the continued engagement of actors and bodies working in the design and implementation of the NAP. Moreover, the participation of civil society in the WG – a crucial element in the creation of effective national action plans⁶ – was restricted to the participation of a single organization, with no additional consultations and dialogue with local women's organizations.

During the elaboration phase, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) released an online form through its website to collect demands and suggestions from external stakeholders. Although this tool demonstrates efforts to democratize and expand public engagement with the elaboration process, there was no transparency on whether demands were included in the NAP's final version. As the preliminary drafts were not available for consultation, it is difficult to assess the level of civil society engagement with the online form.

It is important to say that a series of events were held between March 2014 and April 2015 to mobilize Brazilian actors around the WPS agenda and to raise awareness about the relevance of national action plans. These events gathered officials from governmental institutions, civil society representatives and scholars. Among them were a seminar entitled "Women, Peace and Security in Brazil: Building bridges and overcoming challenges", organized by the Igarapé Institute in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Pandiá Calógeras Institute and UN Women; a workshop on "Women's Protection in Peacekeeping Operations", held by the Brazilian Peace Operation Joint Training Center (CCOPAB); and the roundtable "Brazil and UNSC Resolution 1325" organized by the Pandiá Calógeras Institute, a strategic advisory body of the Ministry of Defense.

⁵ GIANNINI, 2016.

⁶ LIPPAI, YOUNG, 2017; GIANNINI, 2016.



Director of MFA's of International Organizations Department, Ambassador Maria Luisa Escorel, and military women from the Sergio Vieira de Mello Joint Center of Peace Operations – CCOPAB. Image via CCOPAB.

These events provided both government and civil society representatives with opportunities to meet and get familiarized with legal and policy frameworks on the WPS agenda. Nonetheless, the fact that these were small-scale events may have impacted the scope, articulation and the quality of civil society participation and sensitization on this matter.

In sum, efforts of the WG to act through coordinated inter-institutional mechanisms and respecting some level of civil society engagement reflect, on the one hand, that its members built on the methodology and lessons learned documented on best practices guidelines related to NAPs⁷. On the other hand, the lack of regular consultations and the exchange of relevant information with local women's organization and other stakeholders meant that participation levels were still scant.

Table 1: Advances and limits of the elaboration process of the National Action Plan (NAP).

Advances	Limits
Creation of the Working Group with the participation of four ministries, UN Women and local civil society.	Limited civil society involvement, with just one organization invited to participate in the WG. The political environment affected the engagement of ministries and other government bodies.
Creation of an online consultation tool aimed at collecting ideas and suggestions for the NAP.	Lack of transparency and accountability concerning the inputs received through the online form. Lack of formal and regular in-person consultations with representatives of the civil society.
Organization of awareness-raising events.	Small-scale events may have limited the reach and impact of these activities.

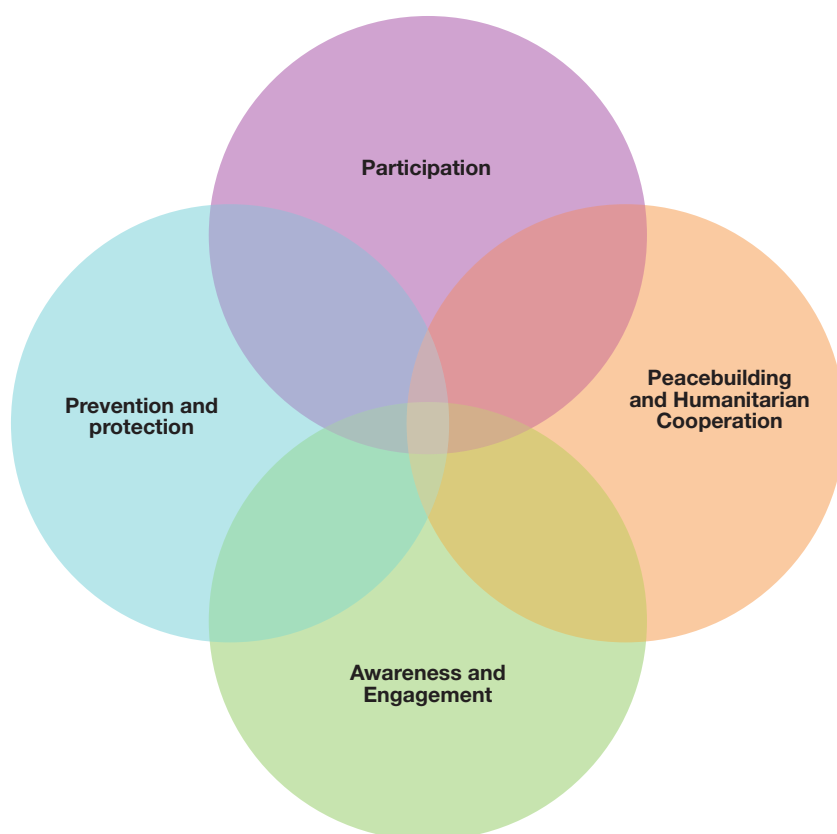
Source: Original material

⁷ LIPPAI, YOUNG, 2017; GIANNINI, 2016.

3.2. Structure

The Brazilian NAP follows four main pillars: (1) Participation, (2) Prevention and Protection, (3) Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Cooperation, and (4) Awareness-raising and Engagement. The four-pillar division is important to create a visually functional structure, especially for a document aimed at guiding several entities. However, it may give way to selective and departmentalized actions. For instance, in some contexts, women's political participation can trigger physical and psychological violence because their presence challenges traditional gender roles⁸. As a result, participation policies must be accompanied by institutional initiatives not only to guarantee equal participation at all levels and in-depth gender-sensitive analysis, but also to avoid the unintended consequences of these policies. There needs to be constant complementarity and synergy between participation policies and the ones focused on violence prevention and protection. Given situations like this one, it is imperative that the institutions involved in the NAP, regardless of their mandate, acknowledge the interdependence of the four-pillar structure, as illustrated below.

Figure 1: Intersection of the four pillars described in the National Action Plan (NAP).



Source: Original material

⁸ DRUMOND, 2015.

Table 2: Advances and limits of the NAP's structure.

Advances	Limits
Adoption of the WPS agenda's fundamental pillars as a guiding structure of the Brazilian NAP.	Lack of clarity regarding the alignment and synergy between thematic pillars.
Delimitation of goals, activities and leading institutions involved in each pillar.	Lack of specific targets and indicators for goals and activities.

Source: Original material

3.3. Content

The Brazilian NAP has an exclusive focus on defense and foreign policy, with particular attention to peace operations, conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes, as well as humanitarian emergencies. It recognizes that women are consistently underrepresented in peace and security initiatives, and commits with women's inclusion and participation in conflict and post-conflict situations. The NAP also acknowledges that empowering women and girls is a step towards effectively preventing and combating gender-based violence and discrimination. Equally important is the attention the plan devotes to the diffusion of knowledge on the WPS agenda in Brazilian society. Particular emphasis is given to awareness-raising initiatives, especially the ones involving civil society actors, such as academics, feminist movements, and local women's organization.

Beyond traditional goals to expand women's participation in the armed forces and peace processes, the Brazilian NAP innovates by including, in the prevention and protection pillar, gender-sensitive initiatives addressing the situation of women refugees in Brazil. These include the commitment to ensure priority to women refugees under the Brazilian Resettlement Program and to promote access to medical and psychosocial services to female refugees who have survived gender-based human right violations. Such provisions respond to contemporary challenges in the face of the increasing refugee influx in Brazil.



A young refugee carries personal objects on a chair in South Sudan (2013). Image via UN Photo/Martine Perret.

In the Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Cooperation pillar, a significant advance was the incorporation of gender perspectives in activities related to demining, as well as disarmament, demobilization, reinsertion and reintegration (DDRR) in post-conflict scenarios. As of today, only 30 percent of the 79 NAPs in place include some reference to issues related to disarmament⁹.



Women doing humanitarian demining in Mehaires, West Sahara.
Image via UN Photo / Martine Perret

Although the NAP's proposed goals and activities reflect the main points of Resolution 1325 (2000), a few challenges in terms of its content persist and should be addressed during the implementation phase. First, it lacks further consideration on the structural conditions and institutional barriers that contribute to women's underrepresentation in peace and security. While during the drafting phase there was a discussion about the existing "barriers that limit the participation of women in activities related to peace and security"¹⁰, the final version of the NAP failed to contemplate such obstacles as well as measures to overcome them. The focus seems to be on increasing the female participation rate, without properly acknowledging the persisting conditions of women's marginalization in the field of peace and security.

A wide variety of factors contribute to women's underrepresentation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes, ranging from discriminatory laws and traditions that hinder their inclusion to more practical and logistical barriers, such as the lack of resources to access negotiation sites, or difficulties for obtaining visas to take part in peace processes. It is, therefore, pivotal to acknowledge these multiple yet sometimes overlapping challenges¹¹. Empowering women and creating conditions for their meaningful participation would allow them to effectively engage, mobilize and influence conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes¹². More than being formally present in all efforts related to peace and security, their full and effective involvement depends on ensuring that their voices and demands are actually heard and integrated through inclusive representation¹³.

Surprisingly, the content of the Brazilian NAP does not consider how to promote women's full and meaningful participation at all levels of peace and security efforts. Despite addressing women's underrepresentation in the armed forces, peacekeeping operations, and the diplomatic arena, the NAP does not adequately engage with

⁹ PEACEWOMEN, 2018.

¹⁰ NAP, 2017.

¹¹ UN WOMEN, 2018, p. 14.

¹² UN WOMEN, 2018, p. 12.

¹³ ELLERBY, 2016.

the root causes of the persisting gender gap in these areas. The link between gender inequality, discrimination and sexist stereotypes attributed to women in these carriers, for instance, is neglected by the document¹⁴. We can also mention the silence on everyday issues that continue to hamper women’s equal participation, such as gender wage gaps and labor conditions, including their exposure to sexual and moral harassment in spaces dominated by men. The lack of discussions on the challenges faced by women in the reproductive age, such as the impact of maternity leave and the absence of daycare at the workplace, and on other obstacles related to their career promotion into senior leadership positions is also notable.



Virgínia Lima, Military Police Captain at the Federal District. She was one of the female police officers deployed at MINUSTAH (2012/2013), and integrated the Gender Mobile Team of the United Nations Police, which supports the Haitian National Police in caring for gender violence victims. Image via AP/FB/VSL.

Concerning peace operations, the Brazilian NAP also focuses on the presence and capacitation of women without properly acknowledging the persisting obstacles to their entrance/acceptance and career promotion in military and police institutions. Importantly, the recognition of the need for infrastructure and logistic adaptations, a fundamental step to their full integration into the armed forces, is not accompanied by compromises and specifications concerning what adjustments are required, and how and when they would be implemented.

Despite recognizing the positive impact of female military observer’s participation in monitoring and reporting episodes of violence against women and girls, the Brazilian NAP does not adequately address the issue of transparency in their selection process. In fact, the document not even mentions the need to appoint more women to these positions, as it can be observed in the use of evasive language in the following objective: “To designate military personnel, *irrespective of sex/gender*, to work on individual missions, including as military observers and/or positions related to international peace and security in the United Nations and other international organizations, provided that they meet the requirements to do so.”¹⁵

The effectiveness of these policies also depends on training and sensitization initiatives designed to educate men in leadership positions, particularly in areas where women face discrimination or obstacles for full and equal participation. Transforming unequal and discriminatory relations against women and girls depends on engaging men and boys as allies in the quest for gender equality. This is a critical issue that requires further attention in future versions.

In the protection and prevention pillar, we underline the inclusion of activities aimed at strengthening the zero-tolerance policy for cases of sexual abuse and exploitation (SEA), as well as the explicit commitment to act rigorously in the prevention, investigation, prosecution, and punishment of these crimes. However, there is a

¹⁴ GIANNINI, FOLLY, LIMA; 2017.

¹⁵ NAP, 2017 (emphasis added).

blatant lack of commitment to modify national legislation on SEA – a crime not contemplated by the Brazilian Military Penal Code. The absence of a criminal definition of SEA governing members of the Brazilian Armed Forces obstructs formal reports, hinders proper data gathering on the matter and creates significant barriers to access to justice for survivors. Against this backdrop, the implementation of corrective and preventive measures may not deliver expected results, hampering the fight against these crimes.

Table 3: Advances and limits of the NAP's content.

Advances	Limits
Acknowledgment of the underrepresentation of women in peace and security initiatives.	Lack of attention to structural and institutional challenges to the effective participation of women in these initiatives.
Commitment to increase the participation and inclusion of Brazilian and local women in peace and security initiatives in which Brazil takes part.	Lack of a clear and transparent mechanism to select female military observers.
Commitment to adopt a gender-sensitive approach to address the situation of women refugees and refugee-seekers in Brazil.	
Incorporation of gender-sensitive perspectives in DDDR and demining processes.	
The inclusion of activities to strengthen the zero-tolerance policy for cases of sexual abuse and exploitation.	Lack of commitment to modify the Brazilian Military Penal Code on SEA.

Source: Original material

3.4. Implementation Strategies

The absence of budget allocation for implementation of the NAP, the lack of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks, targets and indicators to measure the progress of ongoing activities reveal the significant gap of the Brazilian National Action Plan. We divided the main challenges in terms of implementation into four main areas: coordination; budget; M&E; and capacity building and awareness-raising.

3.4.1. Coordination

The recent economic crisis and government changes in Brazil presented significant institutional challenges to the implementation of the WPS agenda. In the face of government cuts in human and financial resources, coordinating efforts between governmental and civil society actors involved with the NAP is crucial to ensure that goals are translated into action. In particular, a well-established coordination structure, with precise tasks and responsibilities for different institutions, as well as the harmonization of activities with gender policies already in place, are critical to enhance expected results. Constant the interaction of actors, and the creation of communication channels and institutional mechanisms that allows them to share experiences, may leverage good performance and avoid the “departmentalization” of their tasks. The concentration of activities and responsibilities assigned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs may also significantly hamper the appropriate engagement of other national institutions with the WPS agenda, such as the legislative and judiciary branches. The active involvement of the legislative and the judiciary powers is crucial for the effective implementation of some of the goals established in the Brazilian NAP, such as the protection of refugees’ rights and the approval of a dedicated budget for implementing the WPS agenda in Brazil.

Establishing coordination mechanisms, therefore, is critical to enhance implementation efforts. In practical terms, this could be advanced in four main ways:

The first relates to the **identification and appointment of champions** committed to the implementation of the WPS agenda in each of the institutions mentioned in the NAP¹⁶. These individuals can act as focal points, supporting and promoting the WPS agenda as part of their activities.

The second mechanism is the creation of **a mixed permanent supervision and evaluation committee**, composed of representatives from the governmental institutions and members of civil society, with the purpose of coordinating the implementation process, regularly collecting and consolidating information about this process, and sharing experiences and lessons learned among the actors involved.

The third proposal refers to **continuous follow-up and reporting of the activities conducted by the institutions involved in the WG**, including through the holding of periodic meetings and preparation of progress reports on the implementation of the goals outlined in the NAP. A regular follow-up of activities can potentially facilitate the harmonization of decisions and actions developed by these various actors.

The fourth proposal is the development of **an independent review** of the progress of the NAP’s goals¹⁷. Although the document foresees an evaluation to be carried out by the WG at the end of 2018, an independent and external assessment of the implementation process, preferably with the participation of civil society representatives, increases the accountability and transparency of the process.

In a nutshell, the revision of the Brazilian NAP should encourage greater synergy between the different actors involved, maximizing invested resources, and optimizing decision-making processes on WPS matters.

3.4.2. Budget

In 2017, Brazil spent over 23 billion dollars in the defense and military sector, including expenses with the armed forces and peace operations. Surprisingly, despite the approval of the NAP and the demands of UNSC Resolution 2242 (2015)¹⁸, which “calls upon Member States to further integrate the women, peace and security agenda into their strategic plans [...] with sufficient resources”, the Brazilian government did not take on any financial commitments to the advance of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.¹⁹

Funding allocation is a crucial dimension for effectively mainstreaming gender policy.²⁰ Other countries, such as the Netherlands and Norway,²¹ for example, moved in this direction by including a dedicated budget earmarked for implementation of their NAPs. In South America, Chile was the only country to do so. In contrast, Brazil decided not to follow their example. The absence of resources may not only weaken the plan’s operationalization, but also make the WPS agenda more vulnerable to political changes and institutional difficulties since governmental actors might choose not to allocate budget shares to activities deemed as ancillary to their immediate goals.²²

¹⁶ LIPPAI, YOUNG, 2017.

¹⁷ LIPPAI, YOUNG, 2017.

¹⁸ UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL, 2015.

¹⁹ PEACEWOMEN, 2017.

²⁰ GIANNINI, 2016; OSCE, 2014.

²¹ GIANNINI, 2016; OSCE, 2014.

²² GIANNINI, 2016.

3.4.3. M&E mechanisms

The development of targets and indicators is crucial for transparency, accountability, and the monitoring of the NAP's progress in Brazil.²³ Monitoring and evaluation efforts should be made through quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis in order to generate substantial evidence to support and improve public policy effectiveness. However, the Brazilian NAP lacks a M&E framework that addresses measurable indicators and specific targets and deadlines for relevant bodies. Consequently, the interpretation and operationalization of the NAP's objectives remain at the discretion of particular government institutions and, therefore, highly dependent on their political will and budget availability.

Importantly, the absence of a baseline study on the Brazilian context poses particular challenges for evaluating the progress of the goals outlined in the document. Another critical shortcoming refers to the short life span of the Brazilian plan. While NAPs are usually approved to last between three to five years, the Brazilian NAP will be in force for two years, a relatively brief timeframe to achieve all 14 broad goals and more than 80 activities set by the document.

3.4.4. Capacity building and awareness-raising

The lack of awareness and gender training on the WPS agenda in relevant institutions can significantly impact the quality of women's participation and the execution of gender-sensitive strategies and policies. One common concern is that there is a shortage of initiatives devoted to capacitate women in the security sector, as often illustrated by the disproportional presence of men in senior foreign policy and defense positions. Therefore, participation and inclusion measures should be developed in parallel with capacity building and awareness-raising activities aimed at promoting a "culture of inclusion"²⁴. Investing in internal capacity is fundamental to ensure the sustainability of the actions foreseen in the NAP in the long run.

Table 4. Implementation Strategies of the National Action Plan (NAP).

Limits
The absence of a dedicated budget for implementation.
The absence of coordination and supervision mechanisms for the implementation phase.
The absence of a monitoring and evaluation framework.
Few measures devoted to internal capacity building and awareness-raising.

Source: Original material

²³ LIPPAI, YOUNG, 2017; GIANNINI, 2016.

²⁴ LIPPAI, YOUNG, 2017: 39.

4. Silences

The WPS agenda provides a holistic framework for tackling the gendered roots of violent conflicts, often underpinned by uneven power relations and gender norms that perpetuate inequality and discrimination. Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000), 1889 (2009) and 2122 (2013), for example, developed multidimensional and comprehensive perspectives that connect security concerns with the eradication of inequalities and the strengthening of human rights norms and institutions. Beyond including women in activities related to peace and security, the implementation of WPS provisions at the domestic level should be responsive and sensitive to local, regional and international dynamics of violence.²⁵

Recent debates about reforming the UN peace and security architecture have also been drawing a link between conflict prevention and the promotion of sustainable economic growth, poverty eradication, social development and access to justice.²⁶ The implications of gender inequality to the consolidation of peace and stability are also recognized by the recent United Nations Security Council Resolution 2282 on “Sustaining Peace”.²⁷

Acknowledging the multidimensional and intersectoral nature of the WPS agenda raises debates that often expose states’ internal contractions and inequalities. Also, and perhaps less surprisingly, many countries have opted for elaborating their NAP as a “foreign policy tool”²⁸, concentrating on a limited list of tasks, which focus on increasing the number of women in peace-related efforts. One possible explanation for this decision is that states might want to avoid internal and international scrutiny on their domestic affairs. By developing NAPs exclusively devoted to addressing defense and foreign policy issues, they disregard the continuum of violence that women and girls experience in times of peace, as well as their internal and external legal obligations when it comes to women’s rights and security.²⁹

Actors involved in the elaboration of the Brazilian NAP, however, took the political decision to avoid any commitment to address the lived insecurities faced by Brazilian women at the national and regional levels. There are at least two fundamental transnational issues related to the security of women and girls in Latin America in general, and in Brazil, in particular, which the NAP fails to address: (i) the gendered impacts of small arms trafficking and proliferation, and debates around disarmament at the local level; and (ii) human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of women, girls, men, and boys, regardless of age, sexual orientation, and gender identity. In recent years, human trafficking has been increasing in Brazil, which serves as a source, transit and destination country for victims of sex trafficking.³⁰ The Trafficking in Persons Report (2016) states:

Brazilian women and children are exploited in sex trafficking within the country, and federal police report higher rates of children exploited in prostitution in the north and northeast regions. Brazilian women are found in sex trafficking abroad, often in Western Europe and China. Women and girls from other South American countries, including Paraguay, are exploited in sex trafficking in Brazil. Transgender Brazilians are forced into prostitution in Brazil. Brazilian men and transgender Brazilians have been exploited in sex trafficking in Spain and Italy.

²⁵ AROUSSI, 2017.

²⁶ SECURITY COUNCIL, 2016.

²⁷ SECURITY COUNCIL, 2016.

²⁸ AROUSSI, 2017.

²⁹ AROUSSI, 2017.

³⁰ US GOVERNMENT, 2016.



UN Special Rapporteur Maria Grazia Giammarinaro addresses the UN Security Council during the open debate on human trafficking in conflict situations. New York, 2017. Image via UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe.

Besides international human trafficking, Brazil ranks as one of the largest producers of small arms and ammunition.³¹ According to the Small Arms Survey, in 2014, Brazil was one of the top three suppliers of small arms in the world, annually exporting 591 million dollars.³² The proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) increases the intensity and duration of armed conflicts, with disproportional impacts on women's rights and security.³³ Even outside conflict situations, small arms and light weapons also have differential impacts for women and girls. Currently, Brazil has the fifth highest rate of femicide in the world. In 2016, about half of the women killed in Brazil were victims of firearms.³⁴ Black women are particularly affected by the proliferation of SALW. Between 2005 and 2015, the death rate from firearms increased 15,4% for black women and decreased in 8 for non-black women.³⁵ The effective implementation of the WPS agenda in Brazil, therefore, depends on the elaboration of measures that recognize the devastating effects of arms proliferation and illicit flows of small arms, light weapons, and ammunition on women's lives. In view of these challenges, it is crucial to translate traditional debates on peace and security to the local reality, bringing the WPS agenda closer to national and regional contexts.

31 DREYFUS, 2010.

32 HOLTOM, PAVESI, 2017.

33 SECURITY COUNCIL, 2001; SMALL ARMS SURVEY, 2012.

34 CARVALHO, 2019.

35 FÓRUM DE SEGURANÇA PÚBLICA, 2018.



Weapons handed over by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) are disabled as part of the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the guerrilla.

Image via UN Photo / Renata Ruiz.

Though Brazil is not a country undergoing an armed conflict, this situation does not preclude the recognition of the centrality of gender equality for sustainable peace. The particular challenges for the protection of women's rights and for addressing insecurities and discrimination faced by black, indigenous and rural Brazilian women must be addressed. The adoption of an intersectional approach that deals with the overlapping of gender with other identity categories, such as race, class, and sexuality, is an important step towards the promotion of policies focused on women's participation, empowerment, and protection. The silence of the Brazilian NAP concerning these dimensions contributes to the reproduction of invisibilities and hierarchies, limiting the transformative potential of the NAP in promoting a fairer and more inclusive society. Gender-sensitive programs and initiatives should consider the plurality of Brazilian women and their needs, recognizing the diversity in their lived experiences as well as the varied challenges and opportunities they encounter. Beyond the search for gender balance in institutional settings, gender-mainstreaming policies should be attentive to which groups of women are being included and benefiting from the initiatives and who might be potentially excluded or silenced by so-called gender-inclusive policies and programs.

Understanding that the WPS agenda is applicable to countries not undergoing armed conflicts is crucial for its successful implementation at the national level. This approach, of course, requires long-term commitments, including engaged leadership, sufficient resources, and broad civil society participation. At the national level, the Brazilian civil society has yet to mobilize around the NAP. The low level of engagement might be explained by the fact that the NAP does not reflect or speak to the issues and demands of local women's organizations in Brazil.

On the occasion of the revision of the Brazilian NAP, we highlight that the document needs to articulate domestic, regional and international demands and priorities. This can be both a challenge and an opportunity, depending on whether Brazil realizes the need to expand its interpretation of the WPS agenda. As for today, we are presented with the prospect of owning the NAP as a multidimensional tool, capable of improving policies on security, human rights, and socioeconomic development through gender perspectives. If it succeeds in reflecting the challenges currently faced by women and girls in Brazil, our NAP may work as a mechanism in favor of more efficient gender public policies at all levels.

5. Final Recommendations

The NAP demonstrates Brazil's commitment to furthering the promotion of international norms and standards related to the protection and empowerment of women and girls. By fulfilling its responsibilities under the NAP, the country holds the chance of proposing innovative grounds to advance the UN agenda on WPS, potentially contributing to breaking structures that seem to make gender equality a distant reality. As Brazil is currently undergoing a review process of its first NAP, this is an excellent opportunity to develop a more effective and innovative policy that may leverage the country's international profile.

This report has identified some progress and engaged in a critical reflection about the content and implementation strategies of the NAP. An overview of the existing challenges gives the impression that if they are left unaddressed by the ongoing review process, the opportunities for implementing the WPS agenda in Brazil will significantly reduce. By putting forward specific recommendations, our purpose is both to support a more active and effective Brazilian engagement with the UN Resolution 1325 principles and, consequently, to reduce the gap between the rhetorical commitments and the operationalization of this policy at the national and regional level.

In this sense, recommendations are to:

- Allocate a dedicated budget for implementation of listed goals and activities;
- Elaborate a monitoring and evaluation framework that clearly defines responsibilities and assigns specific targets, indicators, and deadlines for key activities;
- Elaborate periodic implementation reports to be developed by key actors involved in the implementation of the NAP;
- Create a mixed permanent supervision and evaluation committee, composed of representatives from the government and members from civil society;
- Promote projects and research related to the operationalization of the Brazilian NAP;
- Expand the participation of civil society in the implementation, evaluation and monitoring processes of the NAP;
- Strengthen the local and regional scope of the NAP, including critical issues for the security of women and girls in Latin America, in general, and in Brazil, in particular;
- Adopt an intersectional security perspective, which is sensitive to the overlapping of gender and other identity categories, such as race, class and sexual orientation, and the particularities of local, regional and international contexts;
- Promote debates and workshops about the NAP to support its ownership and appropriation by different stakeholders;
- Hold an independent evaluation of the implementation process of the tasks and goals listed in the Brazilian NAP.

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Read also



STRATEGIC NOTE 27

On the Brink of Danger: Preparing civilians from Brazil to work in unstable countries

Eduarda Passarelli Hamann

(June 2017)



STRATEGIC NOTE 24

Achieving Gender Equality: Best Practices for the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

Maiara Folly and Renata Avelar Giannini

(March 2017)



STRATEGIC PAPER 19

Construindo Planos Nacionais de Ação Eficazes: coletânea de boas práticas

Renata Giannini

(March 2016)



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