



The Regional Civil Society Observatory
المركز الإقليمي لمؤسسات المجتمع المدني



EuroMed Feminist Initiative
المبادرة النسوية الأورومتوسطية
Initiative Féministe EuroMed

REGIONAL GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA IN THE SOUTH MEDITERRANEAN



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**REGIONAL GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA
IN THE SOUTH MEDITERRANEAN**

*This document reflects the discussions throughout the consultative process during 2019-2022.
The content can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or other donors.*

EuroMed Feminist Initiative provides expertise in the field of gender equality and advocates for women's universal human rights as inseparable from democracy building and citizenship, for political solutions to all conflicts, and for the right of peoples to self-determination.

The Regional Civil Society Observatory (RCSO) on violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a civil society mechanism to follow up on the implementation of the Union for the MMediterranean (UfM) Ministerial Process and Declarations on strengthening the role of women in society, in particular in the area of combating all forms of VAWG and Women, Peace and Security (WPSA).

The Regional Observatory aims at producing knowledge and enhancing the understanding and awareness of VAWG and its continuum in peace times and armed conflicts, as well as of the implementation of WPSA. To this goal, the Regional Observatory identifies gaps, collects and analyses data on existing laws, and in all areas of life, and provides recommendations to support a better informed and evidence-based policymaking and legislation towards ending of VAWG.

The Regional Observatory is hosted in the regional office of EuroMed Feminist Initiative in Amman.

*Regional Guidelines
for the implementation of
Women, Peace and Security Agenda
In the South Mediterranean*

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ACRONYMS

CBOs	Community Based Organisations
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CTED	Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate
EFI	EuroMed Feminist Initiative
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
EU	European Union
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GE	Gender Equality
IC	Istanbul Convention
JNCW	Jordanian National Commission for Women
JONAP	The Jordanian National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
NAP	National Action Plan
NCLW	National Commission for Lebanese Women
NGOs	Non – Governmental Organisations
NCW	National Council for Women
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OHCHR	The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
RCSO	Regional Civil Society Observatory on VAWG
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UfM	Union for the Mediterranean
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNSCR 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325
VAWG	Violence against Women and Girls
WHO	World Health Organisation
WPSA	Women, Peace and Security Agenda

I. BACKGROUND

The EuroMed Feminist Initiative has followed the Union for Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial Process on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society since its beginning in 2006, seeing it as a major regional tool for promoting women's rights and equality between women and men across the Euro-Mediterranean Region. The Ministerial Declaration from the 4th UfM Ministerial Conference (27 Nov 2017, Cairo) underlined that violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a root cause of the persisting inequality between women and men and remains a major obstacle for women to enjoy safety and security throughout their lives, and that it is exacerbated during armed conflicts and occupation. The Ministers acknowledged that "the Euro-Mediterranean region is facing serious challenges in terms of peace and security, such as protracted conflicts, extremism, radicalisation and terrorism, with particular risks to women and girls" and recognized that "equal involvement of women in conflict prevention, management, resolution, and peace building, is critical in preserving peace and ensuring global, regional, national, and individual security on a long-term basis. In this regard, much remains to be achieved in the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 as well as the subsequent UNSCRs on Women, Peace and Security, including the UNSCR 2242". Moreover, during the outburst of the Covid-19 pandemic 2019-2020, increased rates of VAWG due to a lack of gender sensitivity in governmental measures to curb the spread of the pandemic, were reported.

At the 5th Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society that took place in Madrid, (26 October 2022), the Ministers reiterated that "To advance women's meaningful participation in decision making in the field of peace and security, prevention and resolution of armed and social conflicts, as well as to strengthen the role of women in preventing violence and extremism as stated in the UfM Cairo Declaration, National Action Plans for carrying out of UNSCR 1325 and the subsequent resolutions within the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPSA), and monitoring mechanism to evaluate the implementation of such national plans shall be adopted."

Following up on the implementation of the Ministerial commitment on combating VAWG and the implementation of a WPSA, the Recommendations from the Gender Regional Platform¹ and Euro-Med Civil Society Women's Rights Conference² (Nov 2017, Cairo), the EuroMed Feminist Initiative launched a multi-year regional campaign on *Zero Tolerance for VAWG*³ in the Southern Mediterranean funded by the European Union (EU). The campaign promoted a comprehensive approach to combating VAWG, including advocating for adopting a specific legislation on VAWG, combating stereotypes and improving equality in and through education, providing fora for multi-stakeholders' dialogue between civil society, legislators, media and policy makers, thus raising awareness of the root-causes of VAWG and its consequences for women, and the whole society.

Further to this, EuroMed Feminist Initiative established in 2019 the Regional Civil Society Observatory on VAWG⁴ (RCSO). The Observatory conducted studies, consultations, and experts' meetings, and developed the 2021 Regional Indexes on the VAWG and WPSA. The two Indexes demonstrate the continuum of VAWG and point out that preventing all forms of VAWG contribute to the strengthening of peace and development of the whole society.

¹ Gender Regional Platform - <https://efi-ife.org/gender-regional-platform-policy-recommendations>

² Euro-Med Civil Society Women's Rights Conference - <https://www.efi-ife.org/declaration-euro-med-women%E2%80%99s-rights-civil-society-conference>

³ Regional Campaign Zero Tolerance for VAWG - <https://efi-ife.org/brief%C2%A0-launching-regional-campaign-zero-tolerance-violence-against-women-and-girls>

⁴ Regional Civil Society Observatory on VAWG - <https://efi-ife.org/regional-civil-society-observatory-vawg-factsheets-vawg-south-mediterranean>

❖ The Process of development of the guidelines

The Regional Guidelines were developed in a participatory process involving a series of national and regional consultations and expert meetings on VAWG and WPSA.

- **National and Regional Consultations**

Recognising the need for developing a robust WPSA in the region, and recognising the intricate linkages between the WPSA, VAWG and equality between women and men, *national consultations* for developing Regional Guidelines for the implementation of WPSA were organized in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia between 2019-2021. They involved over 400 participants, including policy makers, representatives from relevant ministries, and women's rights organisations, civil society actors, community-based organisations (CBOs), human rights defenders, academia, and the media.

The consultations aimed at encouraging and supporting the building of knowledge of the WPSA and political will for its implementation on both the national and regional levels. They aimed at a better understanding of the reasons underlying violence and discrimination against women and girls in order to develop efficient strategies to combat all forms of violence and discrimination against them. Ways by which women and girls could achieve and enjoy their rights and live their lives free from violence were discussed.

During this process, shared challenges that women and girls in the region face, in achieving their rights to full participation in all areas of society and to their right to be able to live a life free from violence and threats, emerged. Common areas were identified under which regional guidelines for interventions were discussed and proposed. Specific national priorities were raised as well.

Thus, the national consultations provided a platform for dialogue for reaching a common understanding and for affirming the normative principles that would form the basis for building a shared WPSA, while recognizing the different national priorities.

A *Regional Conference* was held 21st -22nd May 2022 in Amman, Jordan, for the launching of the 2021 Regional Index on VAWG. The conference was organized by the EuroMed Feminist Initiative, in cooperation with the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Women's Empowerment in Jordan. Ministers and representatives from the relevant ministries from Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Palestine, together with members of national parliaments, civil society partners and gender equality and legal experts, as well as representatives from the EU, UfM and embassies participated and shared experiences.

VAWG was seen and acknowledged as a main barrier to women's full participation in decision making in all fields of life and as a major hindrance to women achieving their rights as well as to society in reaching the objectives of sustainable development, equality and democracy. Concrete policy recommendations for addressing the identified gaps were elaborated.

A final *Euro Mediterranean Regional Round Table on the Regional Guidelines for the implementation of Women, Peace and Security Agenda* was held 3rd – 4th November 2022, in Beirut with the aim to discuss and adopt the regional guidelines for the implementation of the WPSA, as well as to adopt the 2022 Regional Index on WPSA.

Participants here were members of the EuroMed Feminist Initiative, partners, and experts in the field (researchers and legal and gender experts) from 17 countries. The draft of the Regional Guidelines was reviewed, discussed and commented on by the participants. There were presentations and discussions on the status of the WPSA in all the countries, providing added contextual information to the Regional Guidelines.

The outcomes and the recommendations from these national and regional consultations have informed and form the basis for these Guidelines.

- **Regional Experts Group Meetings**

In addition to the national and regional consultations and meetings, a number of expert meetings involving representatives from the EuroMed region were held.

During the period 2020-2021, the RCSO on VAWG developed Regional Indexes on VAWG and WPSA for the seven South Mediterranean countries participating in the campaign - Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia. The Regional Indexes are complementary to each other. Together, they acknowledge the continuum of VAWG, and see combating VAWG as integral to the implementation of the WPSA. For the purpose of developing the Indexes, a *Regional Experts Group* was formed consisting of 13 experts from all the Index countries, included academics, legal experts, and women's rights' advocates, with expertise on combating VAWG and working on WPSA. The experts also raised areas that need attention for developing a WPSA.

Five meetings of the Regional Experts Group were held:

A preparatory meeting was held online on 12th January 2021, for discussing the process and actions needed for updating the Indexes and for identifying further actions to be carried out.

The following meeting was held online on the 17th of August 2021, on the development of the second edition of the Regional Index on VAWG.

The third meeting was held 29th – 30th September 2021 in person on adopting the scoring mechanism for the 2021 Regional Index on VAWG.

The fourth meeting was held 2nd – 3rd November 2021 in-person. The focus was the adoption of the 2021 Regional Index on VAWG.

The last meeting was held online on March 31st, 2022 and finalised the Indexes.

At these meetings, the main topics for discussions were developing the VAWG and WPSA Indexes, and in this process providing relevant information on the challenges in the area of VAWG and in establishing a regional frame of the WPSA. These discussions provided key knowledge, information, and deeper insight into the status of VAWG and the WPSA in the region, also pointing to the gaps and areas that need attention, thus providing a knowledge background for developing the Regional Guidelines on WPSA.

The *Regional Indexes on VAWG and the WPSA* also provide an important knowledge base that informed these Guidelines. The Guidelines are also closely linked to and informed by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda Sustainable Goals (SDGs).

❖ Objectives of the Regional Guidelines for the Implementation of WPSA

The Regional Guidelines may be seen as a firm step in the direction of achieving inclusive peace and social safety in the region. Building regional agreements, platforms and bases for cooperation and policy making, such as these Guidelines, play a critical role in the formulation of normative frameworks that strengthen accountable national institutions, and provide conditions conducive to inclusive and sustainable development. They allow for a better understanding and cooperation between States and thus contribute to peace and stability in the region, and the promotion and protection of human rights for all.

The purpose is to support States as duty bearers in complying with their obligations for implementing international women's rights mechanisms while considering the national contexts and priorities. States can thus comply with international due diligence standards and obligations on human rights, address national priorities identified through the consultations, and commit to the on-going work on developing a comprehensive approach to combating VAWG, thus ensuring women's peace and safety.

The Regional Guidelines can also be used as a tool for advocacy by civil society organisations (CSOs) for the implementation of the WPSA in their countries as well as at the regional level.

II. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS AND WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

❖ Violence against women and girls

VAWG is a universal phenomenon, prevalent in all regions, countries, cultures, and social classes, affecting millions of women worldwide, destroying the fabric of all our societies. It has been defined by the UN as one of the most widespread violations of human rights and as one of the most serious health hazards in the world.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared VAWG to be a serious and pervasive hazard endemic to all societies, its prevalence being of pandemic proportions. A comprehensive report on violence against women by WHO and partner organisations, published on March 9, 2021, shows that across their lifetime, 1 in 3 women (around 736 million) globally, aged 15- 49 years, are subjected to physical or sexual violence by a current or former husband or intimate partner, or sexual violence from a non-partner. Also, according to the study, intimate partner violence is by far the most prevalent form of violence against women globally (affecting around 641 million). 6% of women globally report being sexually assaulted by someone other than their husband or partner. However, given the high levels of stigma and under-reporting of sexual abuse, the true figure could very likely be much higher.

VAWG is a huge obstacle to achieving gender equality, peace, and security, structurally counteracting women's, and girls' enjoyment of their human rights. VAWG is rooted in gender inequality, in the historically, systemic, and structurally unequal status of women and girls in our societies. It is an extreme manifestation of women's and girls' unequal status. It is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality. Thus, VAWG is a main barrier to women's participation in decision making at all levels. The Beijing Platform for Action 1995 declares: 'Violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of women's full advancement'.

Yet, VAWG is actively tolerated in society in both the public and private spheres and affects not only women's lives and safety but that of the whole society. The silence that surrounds this violence contributes to its persistence. Shame and fear of reprisal lead to leaving the perpetrators unpunished: an impunity that is grounded in and perpetuated by the widely spread social misconceptions that violence against women is a private matter, and that women and girls instigate or provoke the violence by their disobedience or non-conformity to their roles in society as women.

Even where organising around women's rights has thrown light on the root causes of the violence and has pushed for improved legislation to prevent the violence, to protect the victims, to provide services and to prosecute the perpetrators, governments worldwide have not been able to address the problem adequately. And although many decision-makers are no longer silent on the matter, concrete and comprehensive measures to tackle VAWG in the social, economic, and political fields, leading to women's increased sense of security are still insufficient.

❖ Continuum of VAWG

Gender equality, violence against women and girls, peace, security, and human rights are closely linked. All forms of VAWG are exacerbated in war and conflict situations. Violence perpetrated against women during armed conflicts has its roots in the historically unequal power relations between women and men entrenched in our societies, and in the persistence of these inequalities in our present societal structures. The subordinated position of women and their marginalization in times of peace, place them in an even more vulnerable situation during war, military conflict, and occupation. Women find themselves trapped and denied economic resources, opportunities, and services.

Feminist theory and UN reports have confirmed the continuum of violence against women in the contexts of peace and war and have examined the different kinds of marginalization and control of women that perpetuate violence against them, while acknowledging the specificity of each context.

The acceptance of VAWG through traditional and cultural practices and the normalisation of this violence in our societies, provide the cultural backdrop and the structural basis for the violence, sexual violence and rapes that are perpetrated against women and girls in times of war and military conflict. And as mentioned earlier, the relegation of VAWG to the private sphere as a family matter, the secrecy and taboos surrounding them, and the impunity that perpetrators enjoy, further compounds the structural bases and root causes for the perpetuation of VAWG, leading to its exacerbation in times of war and armed conflict. Thus, the culture of VAWG in peace time provides the structural basis for the violence and rape perpetrated against them in war and conflict - the violence and sexual assault perpetrated against women and girls in the context of peace time extends into times of war and /or military conflicts.

In addition, the objectification of women and girls and their bodies, the notion by which women and girls are seen as 'possessions' of their husbands and families, and that the "honour" of the husband, and family lies embedded in the bodies of women and girls and in their sexuality, provide the grounds for the use of violence, sexual assault and rape of women and girls in war and armed conflict. Looting, plundering, raping, and killing / destroying the enemies' possessions is then seen as acceptable in war time.

Despite this knowledge, women's security is still excluded from national and international security policies, and violence against women continues to deprive them of the right to live everywhere and always, a life without fear.

Therefore, acknowledging, confirming, and understanding this continuum in violence against women and girls between peace and wartime, makes addressing its root causes crucial to preventing conflicts, and for the sustenance of peace. It is crucial to address VAWG as a political priority.

❖ **Women Peace and Security Agenda**

The WPSA recognises the continuum of VAWG and draws attention to the gender dimension in all responses to threats to peace and security. It defines how security and peace shall be sustained, calls for conflicts to be resolved by political means, integrating gender equality perspectives in all areas – in participation, prevention, protection, and legislation. Working in conjunction with, and building on other international human rights instruments⁵, WPSA stresses that gender equality is central to citizenship and democracy and therefore to peace and security of the whole society. In addition, WPSA states that addressing gender inequality⁶ as the root cause of VAWG, is crucial to preventing conflicts. Thus, central to setting up a WPSA lies the task of addressing VAWG and its root causes.

WPSA focuses not only on preventing VAWG and protecting women and girls from violence, but also on women's right to participate in all decision-making processes, aiming at ensuring that gender equality and the active participation of women and girls are observed and upheld in peaceful times. It calls for equal access for women to power and resources, for women's access to the labour market, in relief and recovery, and transitional gender justice. Therefore, the WPSA needs to be central to, and an integral part of all government policies of all States at all times, both in their internal (e.g., domestic, judicial) and external (e.g., foreign and security, trade, and migration) policies, programmes, and actions.

WPSA aims to ensure the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security adopted in 2000, and its consequent Resolutions⁷. Should a conflict arise, WPSA prescribes to secure women equal participation in decision-making and peace negotiations during all stages of the conflict in order to support its political resolution and avoid escalations of armed interventions. Therefore, WPSA applies a gender analysis to all areas of participation, prevention, protection, legislation, VAWG, equal access to power and resources as well as to the labour market, recovery, and transitional gender justice after military conflict, ending of occupation and militarization. These actions are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.

As WPSA is based on women's universal human rights, it is integral to all State safety and security policies. It guides States and requires that resources are allocated for the integration of a gender perspective into all policies, not just those directly related to women. This includes conflict resolution, mediation, peace negotiations, including under occupation, peacekeeping and humanitarian response and post-conflict reconstruction, including demobilization, disarmament and reintegration, and security sector reform.

WPSA also emphasizes the need to prevent and protect women and girls from sexual violence and exploitation. It recognizes that rape and other forms of sexual violence and exploitation can constitute

⁵ The UN Sustainable Goal no. 5 declares that Gender equality is a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world.

⁶ The Beijing Platform for Action acknowledges violence against women as an extreme manifestation of the historically embedded hierarchies in gender roles and power differences between men and women in all our societies.

⁷ UNSCR 1325 (2000), 1820 (2009), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2010), 1960 (2011), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2242 (2015) and 2467 (2019).

a war crime, a crime against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide (Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, 17th July 1998). Thus, WPSA focuses on victims' rights to justice and redress for sexual violence and stresses the importance of ending impunity for such crimes.

A real implementation of WPSA requires the engagement and active involvement of women, women's rights organisations and women's rights defenders at all levels and all stages of the process - in shaping policies, in implementation and in monitoring.

III. OUTCOMES OF THE CONSULTATIONS AND EXPERTS' MEETINGS

Throughout the consultation process (2019-2022) there has been a clear acknowledgment that *addressing VAWG is central to developing a WPSA*, that because of their designated unequal social status, women and girls in all societies are made vulnerable to and subject to many forms of violence and abuse throughout their lifetimes. Consequently, a holistic approach and a comprehensive legislation for combatting all forms of VAWG are required.

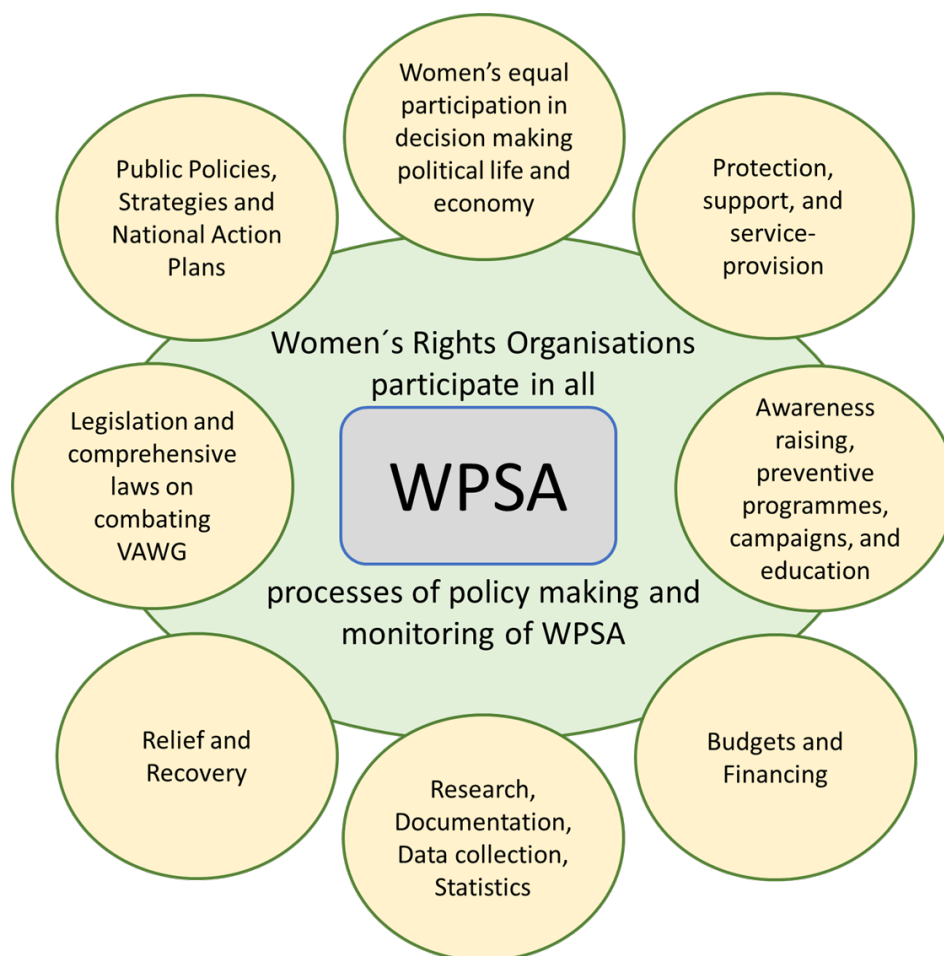
Further, the process acknowledged that the violence and abuse that women and girls are subject to in times of peace, are extended into times of war and armed conflict. There is a *continuum* in the violence, from peace times into times of war and armed conflict and occupation, and again into times of post-war and post armed conflict.

Therefore, a strong WPSA cannot be developed without eliminating all forms of VAWG, and vice - versa: VAWG cannot be eliminated without a holistic comprehensive approach to all forms of VAWG, addressing this violence at the highest levels of national security-building, and developing policies and comprehensive laws for combatting all its forms.

❖ Main areas of intervention for a WPSA in the South Mediterranean

Through this process, 8 areas for interventions and 1 cross-cutting issue have been identified for the setting up of a shared WPSA in the region:

- **Legislation and comprehensive laws on combating VAWG**
- **Public policies, strategies and NAPs for UNSCR 1325**
- **Women's equal participation in decision making positions in political and economic sphere**
- **Protection, victims' support, and service-provision**
- **Awareness raising, preventive programmes, campaigns, and education**
- **Relief and recovery**
- **Research, documentation, data collection and statistics**
- **Budgeting and financing**
- **Cross-cutting issue: Women's rights organisations' involvement in all processes of policy making and monitoring of the WPSA**

Figure 1 Areas for interventions to support the implementation of WPSA

- Legislation and comprehensive laws on combating VAWG

In all countries, combating VAWG is closely linked to promoting women's human rights. VAWG has been identified as a major barrier to women's participation in the political and economic processes in all countries, and therefore ensuring the prevention of, and protection from VAWG, is seen as a high priority. All countries affirm that VAWG stems from the denial of full equality between women and men in all spheres of life. The consultations also reveal that legislation on combating VAWG is still fragmented, addressing different forms of violence separately, under separate pieces of legislation, and call for *legal reform*, amending legislation, and adopting a *comprehensive legislation on VAWG* as a first essential step in combating this violence and ensuring women's rights. As Tunisia and Morocco have enacted specific laws on combating VAWG, the priorities raised in these countries are linked to the full implementation of these laws and increasing public knowledge and information about them.

There are also persisting discriminatory laws as well as laws that justify VAWG. National legislations are not yet *fully harmonised with international conventions*, while maintained reservations counteract women's empowerment and enjoyment of their rights and safety and allow perpetrators to escape sanctions.

Furthermore, together with the development or applications of legal provisions for victims of VAWG where they exist, there is a need to always provide victims with *social reintegration opportunities*: in

times of peace as well as in the event of war or military conflict, and in post conflict situations. VAWG is as well not addressed in the laws governing a state of emergency, missions of the army and/or the security apparatus.

Despite some progress, challenges also persist for women and girls in realising *access to justice*. Legal frameworks often fail to prevent and address VAWG including sexual violence and stop impunity for these violations of women's and girls' rights. Institutions and agencies in the justice sector often fail in delivering fair justice to women and girls victims, often due to a lack of awareness, capacity, and/or resources. Justice institutions may also be unresponsive or geographically inaccessible, thus deterring women from seeking to claim their rights. The difficulties and challenges that women and girls face in their access to justice are further exacerbated in military conflict and occupation.

Furthermore, both legislation and a *gender sensitive Constitution* are seen as central concepts in setting up a WPSA agenda. In Syria in particular, the participation of women's rights defenders in the constitutional process has been viewed as a guarantee that gender equality and women's rights are considered in the constitution, which provides a basis for women's equal participation in shaping the future of Syria. As the Constitution being the Supreme law of a State sets out the fundamental principles by which the State is governed, as well as the rights and duties of citizens, it needs to be revised from a gender and equal rights perspective, to be rights-based and ensure women's and girls' access to justice.

- Public policies, strategies and NAPs for UNSCR 1325

Policies and measures for ensuring women's safety and security are yet to be prioritised and efforts enhanced towards eliminating all forms of VAWG, to allow women's full participation in society. In parallel, proactive policies and strategies enabling women's participation and role in all fields are still absent.

A close connection has been underlined between the *UNSCR 1325*, the implementation of WPSA and all international human rights instruments. Iraq and Palestine are implementing their second NAPs on the UNSCR 1325. Palestine NAP is innovative in that it addresses women's situation under occupation. Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia have also developed NAPs for UNSCR 1325. While these countries have developed NAPs for the implementation of UNSCR 1325, budgets and resources have not been set aside for their implementation and their regular monitoring and evaluation remains to be seen. Egypt and Morocco have not yet developed NAPs, even if the women's movement has been advocating for it. Syrian women's movement has developed recommendations for the development of a NAP for UNSCR 1325 for Syrian context.

Only Egypt and Lebanon have a *national strategy* to combat violence against women. Algeria has the 2008- 2018 Strategy on Violence. However, these strategies have not been supported by adequate financial resources. They do not always address the root causes of VAWG and women's and girls' disempowerment, and do not always address perpetrators, keeping them away from the victims.

Policies on *access to services* seldom pay attention to the needs of women and girls in remote areas as well as women who are disabled or double marginalised.

The establishment of *cross-sector and executive bodies* to oversee the implementation of these plans, strategies and policies are a precondition for their efficient implementation. Lebanon has a National Gender Observatory, Jordan has the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Women's Empowerment,

Morocco, Tunisia, and Palestine have the National Observatories on VAWG at respective Ministries responsible for the women's rights portfolio.

- **Women's equal participation in decision making positions in political and economic spheres**

VAWG has been repeatedly identified as a barrier for women's equal participation in decision making at all levels, including in those related to conflict prevention, finding political solutions to conflicts, as well as in peacebuilding. The participation of women and girls in all processes related to peace and security has not been ensured, including in political participation and leadership. Furthermore, multiple hindrances, from *stereotypes to structural barriers*, deny women their right to equal participation and decision-making in the economic processes. Even if this participation has increased in some countries, the equal representation of women and men in parliaments in all the countries in the region is far from being reached, as women represent less than one third of the members in all the parliaments.⁸ As seen in the case of Lebanon, half the candidates running in local elections in 2010 wanted to withdraw their candidature due to harassment and threats from the public. The economic gaps between women and men also lead to increased VAWG and limits women's participation.

Further, as underlined many times, VAWG hinders the equal participation of women in all areas of society, including in decision making and peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes, and thus is a huge obstacle to women's equal participation. Therefore, from the perspective of its negative consequences to women's participation in public life in general, *VAWG needs to be addressed in establishing a WPSA*. For this, discriminatory legislation and practices that violate the human rights of women and girls need to be removed, women's leadership and citizenship must be acknowledged. This has been underlined in particular, in the consultations for Syria and Palestine.

In Palestine, there is a need for the women's movement to form a balanced, cohesive, and strong movement, and take an active role in politics. However, the occupation forms a backdrop for Palestinian women's lower status as women's activism is seen as 'terrorism' by the State of Israel. The occupation has disenfranchised the young generation who has not experienced an electoral process nor taken part in decision-making processes. Thus, the great importance of involving young women and men in the process of rebuilding and reviewing the constitution and in legislative and electoral processes, through consultations in the local community has been underlined. The blockade of the Gaza strip has huge implications for women, subjecting them to compounded violence. The need to include these women in plans and consultations related to women, peace and security agenda has been stressed.

In Syria, a better understanding of the reasons underlying VAWG has been raised, in order to support developing strategies to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls, while emphasizing women's agency and participation in all stages of decision-making in the challenging context of the country.

- **Protection, victims' support, and service-provision**

In all countries the provision of services for victims of VAWG (health care, psychological, legal and social services) has improved. However, it is not sufficient to solely offer women protection. Victims

⁸ Regional Index on WPSA - <https://www.efi-rcso.org>

need support in *accessing justice*. Therefore, the role of the State in supporting victims, especially in providing *legal assistance* is essential.

One of the most important measures to protect women victims of VAWG is to offer the victims *shelters* where they can take refuge, especially when they have no financial resources. In all countries where consultations took place, except Lebanon, the State provides shelters. However, these have been reported as not enough in numbers and geographic distribution. Furthermore, *special assistance* is lacking for women who belong to *vulnerable groups* such as, religious, ethnic, or other minorities, refugees and migrants.

Women and girls need protection from violence in times of peace as well as in times of war and armed conflict and in post-conflict situations. The *protection needs of refugee women and girls* should be emphasised and addressed in a WPSA.

In addition to good protection measures, victims of VAWG ought to be provided with all support services for their *re-establishment and re-integration into society*. It is important that all these protection and support services are *easily accessible* both to women in remote and rural areas, and women in marginalised communities.

- Awareness raising, preventive programmes, campaigns, and education

In all countries a shared concern is that although VAWG is a flagrant violation of women's human rights, it is accompanied by a *global social silence and tolerance*, a *weakness of government policies* to limit and prevent it, and an *impunity* that perpetrators enjoy. The consultations raise concerns around the *stereotyping* of women and women's roles, including by the media, and the *shrinking spaces* for women in politics. VAWG is widely tolerated because *social norms and attitudes* have been widely tolerated. Therefore, legal reform alone is not enough: the need for awareness raising campaigns to *challenge social tolerance for violence* and *shift the shame and blame* from the victim to the perpetrator have been underlined, together with *including men and boys* in combating VAWG. In addition, the importance of preventive programmes, regular information-sharing on women's and girls' rights, together with the promotion of *equality in and through education*, is emphasised.

The State has a leading role in raising awareness about the *root causes of VAWG* and ensuring the peace and safety of women. The role of civil society is also crucial in raising awareness about stereotypes and discrimination against women. Furthermore, laws addressing VAWG must be made visible; all public agencies and all of society must be made aware of them.

Education remains one of the most important channels for the prevention of VAWG. Integrating VAWG and the principles of equality into education programmes, as well as providing training programmes for teachers, helps to address gender biases at the early stages of education. This is a concern for the whole region.

The *media* play a key role in challenging or spreading gender stereotypes. By addressing traditional stereotypes in society, the media can contribute to changes in public attitudes.

- Relief and recovery

In times of war and armed conflict, women and girls being the main victims, are forced to flee from their homes and are often subject to sexual violence and rape. Relief and recovery are seen as undermined in the region. While certain level of protection and support services are being made

available to victims of VAWG, *women refugees and women from minority communities* are often neglected. CSOs from Syria report that there is urgency to address the needs of women victims in post war camps in the country. Iraq is currently implementing the country's 2nd NAP on the UNSCR 1325, but relief and recovery concerns are left aside.

The report from the international conference organized by the Syrian Feminist Lobby and the EuroMed Feminist Initiative on *Gender-sensitive Transitional Justice Process*⁹, in February 2019 in Paris, underlines the importance of applying a feminist perspective to transformative transitional justice, especially in the present Syrian context.

The report points out that the impact of crimes and violations against women extends over generations and the violations against women continue even after the conflict has ended, if the transitional justice process is neither transformative nor gender sensitive. Transformative transitional justice contributes to achieving gender equality and balancing the power structures, thus addressing a root cause of violence against women.

- Research, documentation, data collection and statistics

The lack of accountability and the impunity that perpetrators of VAWG enjoy, threaten the peace and security of the whole society. In this regard, the consultations have underlined the importance of *knowledge-building, and research* to support informed decisions and political will.

All the countries share the conviction that *collecting data and information* and conducting research must be applied in the whole region. There is a lack of information and statistics on *women being killed*, on women approaching shelters and counselling centres, on women subject to *sexual violence and rape*, *women in prisons* and in post war *refugee camps* and on *refugee women in general*. A further concern raised is the *lack of documentation* of the impact on women and girls of displacement and forced migration. *Gender desegregated data, statistics* and independent research on the status of women, including refugee women are emphasised as necessary tools.

- Budgeting and financing

The lack of committed direct funding from the State and an over reliance on international donors are a real challenge for the implementation of the WPSA and the sustainability of its provisions. A WPSA may have excellent provisions, but without *reliable and secure financing mechanisms* ensuring the implementation of all areas of concern and intervention, it may never get realised.

WPSA provisions in the South Mediterranean countries are not incorporated in national budgets. Consequently, specific cross sector and executive bodies linked to the implementation of WPSA are not set up in order to oversee the implementation of plans, strategies, policies and measures.

In the case of women refugees, *strategic planning frameworks* incorporating comprehensive gender analyses and *gender responsive budgets* are missing. So far, budgets and strategic planning frameworks deal with women refugees in terms of relief and recovery within their general plans that address refugees in general, and not women specifically.

⁹ [Gender-Sensitive Transitional Justice Process in Syria - Report 2019_0.pdf \(efi-ife.org\)](#)

The process of developing NAPS and laws, policies and measures have a positive and normative impact on society and raises awareness on the WPSA in the different sectors of society. However *secure and adequate earmarked funding* is essential for their implementation.

Women's CSOs also point to dilemmas they face in securing the funding they need for the sustainability of their work. *Women's rights CSOs need funding* that they can use on their own independent terms, for promoting the rights of women and girls, and for providing protection and counselling services for all victims of VAWG as well as for working towards the implementation of the WPSA.

- **Cross-cutting issue: Women's rights organisations' involvement in all processes of policy making and monitoring of the WPSA**

Finally, the *participation of women's rights organisations in all processes* has been seen as cross cutting for all the areas of intervention identified for the implementation of a WPSA. Women's rights CSOs *have knowledge and competence* on the situation and status of women and girls on the ground. Their active participation is therefore needed *at all stages and all levels* of the process.

In Iraq, women's rights organisations have led the developing the first Iraq NAP for UNSCR 1325, which is the first NAP 1325 in the region. They also continue to provide services, including legal services for victims of VAWG, as well as conduct awareness raising campaigns. They are engaged as well in providing training to the judiciary, working in collaboration with judges.

Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Tunisia ensure coordination between different stakeholders, including women's rights CSOs, in their NAPs for UNSCR 1325. The NAPs in Lebanon and Tunisia mention the involvement of CSOs. However, these countries do not involve CSOs directly in the NAPs implementation. Morocco has a coordination body for women's CSOs.

Women's Rights CSOs and their participation are also essential in *all negotiations and in all systems* set up on national and regional levels to monitor, document and investigate acts of violence against women during armed conflicts. Algeria is part of a regular African regional meeting on the UNSCR 1325, however women's rights CSOs are not included in these meetings.

Women's rights CSOs are active and work together on Euro-Med level for the initiation of a regional peace process towards ending Israeli occupation and reaching a political solution to the conflicts in Syria and Yemen.

❖ **Major shared challenges and concerns for the region**

- Lack of sufficient knowledge of WPSA and its relevance for all countries, not only for those directly impacted by war.
- Continued silence around VAWG, the killings of women and girls in all the countries, and the impunity that perpetrators enjoy.
- The need of gender sensitizing constitutions.
- Persistence of discriminatory laws, and where laws do exist, the gap between the laws and their implementation.

- Absence of efficient strategic plans and coordinated policies addressing all aspects of VAWG.
- Women's access to power and women equal participation remain a global challenge.
- Lack of information, documentation, and desegregated statistics on all forms of VAWG, including sexual violence and the killings of women.
- Insufficient attention given to relief and recovery.
- Gap in the UNSCR 1325, regarding the situation of women under occupation, and need for stronger solidarity in the international women's movement, in particular with the Palestinian women's movement which is acting under occupation.
- Lack of earmarked allocated budgets for policies, strategies, measures and NAPs for UNSCR 1325.
- Insufficient protection measures further weakened due to cultural relativistic notions around VAWG and women in refugee and minority communities.
- Lack of awareness raising and international advocacy.
- Lack of sufficient funding for women's rights CSOs, which contributes to narrowing of their role and their involvement in combating VAWG, providing non-violent solutions to conflicts.

IV. REGIONAL GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WPSA

For a successful development and implementation of a WPSA, the issues and factors which have been identified need to be diligently considered and addressed in parallel.

VAWG is a major human rights violation and a main barrier to women's full participation in decision making. Its prevention, the protection of victims, the prosecution of perpetrators, provision of adequate services, and the delivery and implementation of strong coordinated policies must be studied, explored, and implemented, with the active involvement of women's rights organisations and informed by feminist research.

VAWG should be acknowledged as a national and human security concern and consequently addressed as a political priority. In order to achieve this, a comprehensive legal framework obligating all sectors in the State, to prevent, protect, provide services and coordinate all policies is requested.

The root causes of VAWG should be addressed through policies and legislation, including removing discriminatory legislation against women, empowering women and girls throughout their lifetimes, delivering protection and services to victims, prosecuting and sanctioning the perpetrators, while constantly keeping women's and girls' rights and needs at the centre.

The continuum of violence needs to be acknowledged and addressed. It is therefore essential that measures and mechanisms for addressing VAWG are incorporated into all national and international security policies, not just into specific national policies on addressing VAWG.

Adequate human and financial resources should be allocated for the establishment of the WPSA. The implementation of NAPs for UNSCR 1325 requires the allocation of specific budgets for developing effective mechanisms to ensure parliamentary oversight.

The above also request institutionalising of training programmes for the judiciary and other authorities and first respondents to ensure a competent victim centred approach is applied.

An on-going awareness raising and campaigning, improving equality in and through education as well as involving media in breaking stereotypes are essential for preventing VAWG and for the successful implementation of all policies and legislation.

The development, implementation and monitoring of WPSA requires the engagement of women's organisations in a cross-sector dialogue with decision-and-policy makers. It requires the inclusion of refugee and migrant women's associations, gender experts and human rights defenders.

Legislation and comprehensive laws on combating VAWG

The law is an important tool for defining women' and girl's human rights and provides a framework for ensuring women's and girls' enjoyment of these rights and for ensuring that these rights are not violated. The difficulties and challenges that women and girls face in their access to justice are further exacerbated in military conflict and occupation.

VAWG is a very complex phenomenon, having a huge negative impact on women and girls at all times, whether in peacetime or in times of armed conflict, on various aspects of their lives – in the family, out in society and in public life - and needs to be addressed comprehensively from the various perspectives of prevention, protection, prosecution, monitoring and co-ordinated policy making. Only such an approach enables further the implementation of WPSA and opens a way for further legislation on procedures during and post military conflict and occupation.

The guidelines in the area of legislation include:

- Develop comprehensive laws to combat all forms of VAWG that include a definition on VAWG based on international legal and policy instruments, criminalizes all forms of VAWG, integrates issues of prevention and protection, stipulates the provision of support services for the victims (health, economic, social, psychological, legal), as well as adequate sanctions for perpetrators and availability of remedies for the victims.
- Furthermore, develop legislation for the provision of reintegration of victims of VAWG into society during war and post military conflict.
- Enact laws for protecting women in times of emergency, war and armed conflict and post conflict situations.
- Carry out a comprehensive in-depth review of national legislation with the view to identify all laws that are discriminatory against women and girls and hinder the implementation of the UNSCR 1325, such that they be removed from national legislation.
- Develop laws regulating electoral processes for promoting the equal participation of women, such as quotas.
- Revise national constitutions to ensure equality between women and men. Establish a body or commission mandated to revise national constitutions in order to promote equality between women and men and develop strategies to promote women's rights and empowerment.

- Align national laws and legislation with ratified women's rights conventions and international agreements and lift all reservations to these agreements and conventions.

Public policies, strategies, and national action plans

VAWG exacerbates during armed conflicts and women's and girls' vulnerability is increased. Policies and measures for the prevention of VAWG in peace time are therefore central to the WPSA to reach for political solutions to conflict.

Policies, Strategies and National Action Plans are major tools for bringing about transformative change in society, and for ensuring the implementation of a strong WPSA.

The guidelines in the area of public policies, strategies and national action plans include:

- Acknowledge VAWG as a gross violation of women and girls' integrity and human rights and is a violation of women and girls' basic right to live a life free from violence and threats. Give VAWG priority at the highest political level such as in high level policy making and strategies.
- Develop robust NAPs for the implementation of the WPSA, adequately addressing all identified areas by the national and regional consultations.
- Develop policies and national strategies on combating all forms of VAWG on multiple levels: prevention, protection and service provision.
- Develop policies and national strategies on enhancing equality between women and men and women's participation in decision making in all fields of life, particularly in political and economic participation.
- Revise policies addressing refugees from a gender perspective so as to provide protection to women and girls according to their specific needs.
- Develop policies and strategies addressing the specific needs of women and girl refugees in Crisis Response Plans and other strategy documents.
- For all national policies and strategies, develop NAPs for their implementation including, budgets, monitoring and evaluations plans and reporting mechanisms.

Women's equal participation in decision making in political and economic spheres

Ensuring the equal participation of women in all areas of life and in all decision-making processes in peace time as well as in times of armed conflicts, is essential to the building of a strong WSPA.

Women's right to equal participation in politics and political decision making is essential to achieving equality. And women's participation in the labour market is important for women's economic empowerment and for the general improvement of the economic status of the society.

Guidelines in the area of women's equal participation include:

- Initiate programmes that promote women's participation at all levels of decision making in peace processes, including negotiations, mediation, and transitional justice.

- Implement measures for the equal participation of women at all levels of decision-making and policy making.
- Recruit and appoint women to senior decision-making positions in all sectors, from the local to the national level, including in governments, elected councils, diplomatic missions, the military, and the police.
- Recruit and appoint women into decision-making positions in all peace processes.
- Develop and introduce appropriate infrastructure and public initiatives for the empowerment of women in the economic and political sphere. The initiatives should enable women's equal participation in public life, work life and decision-making processes, such as the provision of day care centres, kindergartens, and health care services.
- Initiate measures that provide women with work life accessibility and economic independence, including measures for the inclusion of women victims of VAWG in the labour market.
- Carry out training and capacity building activities that promote the participation of women in all areas of public and work life.
- Carry out training for security sector institutions to integrate a gender perspective in their practice and work.

Protection, victims' support, and service-provision

Protection of the rights of women are a central component of WPSA. The protection of women's and girls' human rights to a life free from violence and threats and ensuring their safety are therefore crucial to a WPSA. Women and girls ought to be protected from violence in times of peace as well as in times of war and armed conflict. The protection needs of refugee women and girls should be enshrined in a WPSA.

Guidelines in the area of protection, support, and service-provision include:

- Integrate programmes and measures for the prevention of VAWG and the protection of all victims of VAWG into national security policies and into NAPs for achieving WPSA.
- Implement protection measures and services for women and girls and for victims of VAWG.
- Provide social services and other support services for all victims of VAWG, including support for finding housing and free legal aid.
- Integrate measures guaranteeing the rights of women and girls to protection into national security policies, including emergency ordinances, laws, and missions of the army, and in the security apparatus.
- Establish and /or increase the number of specialised services, including shelters, hotlines and counselling services for victims of VAWG, and ensure accessibility to them in the rural and distant areas.
- Develop measures to provide a safe environment for women and girls in schools and educational institutions.

- Address impunity, by prosecuting and sanctioning perpetrators of VAWG both in times of peace and in times of armed conflict, occupation and post conflict.

Awareness raising, preventive campaigns and education

The commitment of the States to zero tolerance for VAWG supports changes in public attitudes. Education is also an extremely important channel for the prevention of VAWG already at an early stage in schools and educational institutions.

The media play a key role in raising awareness in society, addressing stereotypes and changing attitudes.

The guidelines in the area of prevention, awareness raising, and education include:

- Carry out continuous media campaigns aiming at addressing stereotypes and changing attitudes towards zero tolerance for VAWG, shifting the shame and blame from the victim to the perpetrator.
- Mainstream a gender equality perspective and language to all policy documents, monitoring assessments and evaluation mechanisms of governmental initiatives and programmes.
- Mainstream a gender equality to all programmes and initiatives for political solutions to conflicts.
- Carry out training on VAWG and WPSA for staff and personnel in all security and service institutions, such as the police, judiciary, and prison services.
- Revise curricula and educational programmes in schools and educational institutions in order to change stereotypes and to promote equality in and through education.
- Initiate educational programmes especially directed at men and boys regarding gender equality and VAWG.
- Develop and initiate measures that provide girls' access to higher education and prevent girls from dropping out of school.
- Raise awareness on the importance of an independent, gender sensitive media.

Relief and recovery

All reparation, relief and recovery programmes need to be gender sensitive. The WPSA calls for attention to be paid to the particular relief and recovery needs of women and girls. Initiatives and measures providing relief from the traumatic experiences they have been through and providing help and support while recovering are needed. All programmes and services need to acknowledge that VAWG is a gross violation of the human rights of women all women, including refugee women. Displaced women and girls, women and girls subject to forced migration, survivors of VAWG, women with disabilities need to be paid attention to in all these programmes.

The guidelines in the area of relief and recovery include:

- Revise reparation programmes from a gender sensitive perspective.

- Ensure that framework plans on relief and recovery address women refugees and their needs specifically.
- Issue and formulate programmes and procedures during times of war and military conflict that would ensure a sensitive reintegration of victims of VAWG back into their communities and pay special attention to the needs of women and girls during repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation, and reintegration.
- Establish processes that guarantee women's rights to property during their return and resettlement. Also, provide accommodation adapted to the specific needs of women.
- Revise policies addressing refugees from a gender sensitive perspective in order to consider and support the particular needs of women and girls.
- Develop gender sensitive strategies and planning frameworks for women refugees in conflict affected countries and refugee hosting countries.
- Ensure that protection services for victims of VAWG are equally accessible to refugee women and women from minority communities.
- Ensure protection and support services for victims of VAWG during armed conflict, including victims of sexual assault and rape.
- Ensure protection from VAWG for women and girls during occupation and in post-war settings.
- Ensure the involvement of women's rights defenders in all aspects, phases, and levels of provisions of relief and recovery.
- Include gender-sensitive transformative justice and victims' rights in political processes to ensure women's rights; adopt transformative transitional justice as a tool in adopting gender equality perspective.
- Collaborate with civil society organisations working on transitional justice and women's rights.

Research, documentation, data collection, and statistics

Research, documentation, data collection and gender desegregated statistics provide the knowledge base for informed decision making and for developing a WPSA.

The guidelines in the area of research, documentation, data collection and statistics include:

- Establish National Observatories on VAWG to carry out research and documentation on different forms of VAWG, their extent and prevalence, and issue reports with policy recommendations.
- Document and evaluate protection and support services available for victims of VAWG, including refugee women and women from minority communities.
- Document all the crimes and violations against women and girls, including the killings of women.
- Collect anonymous statistics on the numbers of women approaching shelters and counselling centres, the numbers of women subject to sexual violence and rape, the numbers of women in prisons and in post war refugee camps.

- Evaluate and assess the implementation of NAPs on a regular basis. Establish a unit responsible for carrying this out.
- Carry out research and documentation on the status of women about the specific situation of refugee women and girls.
- Research and document the impact of displacement and forced migration on women and girls.
- Carry out research and documentation on women's status in society, among other things, women's participation in all areas of society and on women's economic status.
- Carry out research and collect data on VAWG, its extent, causes and consequences, including services provided for them.
- Document public policies addressing women and girls.
- Collect and publish data on women's participation in decision making processes.
- Collect statistics on the numbers of women in the security and diplomatic missions, the armed forces and the military, and update the information on a regular basis. These statistics shall be published on a regular basis.
- Collect and publish data and documentation on women's presence in the armed forces, the military, diplomatic corps, anti-terrorist agencies, governmental bodies, national parliaments, and local municipalities.
- Carry out gender analyses of policy documents and governmental initiatives and programmes.
- Establish a system to monitor, document and investigate acts of violence against women during armed conflicts and occupation.

Budgets and financing

The allocation of adequate budgets and ensuring the funding of all the initiatives and measures is essential for the implementation of the WPSA. The lack of adequate allocation of funds and the lack of committed direct funding from the State and an over reliance on international donors are a real challenge for the real implementation of the WPSA and the sustainability of its provisions.

All policies, strategies and NAPs ensuring the implementation of a strong WPSA, need to be accompanied by allocated budgets and bodies to monitor their implementation and ensure women's participation in decision making in all phases of peace building, reconciliation, and reconstruction.

The guidelines in the area of budgets and financing include:

- Fund independent research institutions and research programmes on the status of women and on VAWG.
- Allocate adequate funding for research and documentation and evaluation and monitoring.
- Allocate sufficient national funding for both for development and full implementation of all provisions of NAPs, strategies and policies.
- Allocate sufficient funding for the evaluation and assessment of the implementation of NAPs, strategies and policies on a regular basis.

- Allocate sufficient human and financial resources for the establishment of units or agencies assigned with the follow up, monitoring and evaluation of the NAPs, strategies and policies.
- Allocate sufficient and secure budget and resources for developing and implementing a WPSA, including the measures in all areas identified by these guidelines.
- Incorporate gender responsive budgets based on comprehensive gender analysis in strategic planning frameworks for women refugees.
- Allocate sufficient funding for independent research and documentation on the status of women, on women, peace and security, and on VAWG.
- Provide funding to independent women's rights CSOs and their work.

Women's rights organisations' involvement – a cross cutting issue

The role and involvement of women's rights organisations in developing and implementing a WPSA is an issue, cutting across all the above areas.

The guidelines in the area of women's rights organisations' involvement include:

- Adopt measures to enable and guarantee women and women's rights defenders meaningful participation and roles in all peace processes and negotiations and at all levels.
- Establish mechanisms, ensuring the participation of women's rights experts and CSOs in development, implementation and monitoring of national strategies, policies and action plans.
- Ensure and support independent women's rights CSOs.

Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPSA) highlights the continuum of violence against women and girls (VAWG) and aims to ensure the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR1325) on women, peace and security, adopted in 2000, and its consecutive UNSC Resolutions.

WPSA calls for conflicts to be resolved by political means, integrating gender equality perspectives in all areas – in participation, prevention, protection, and legislation.

Thus, WPSA relevance is not limited to conflict situations only. WPSA is central to all governmental policies and ought to be systematically implemented by all States, globally.