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## 6. Recommendations

### Recommendations for the Commonwealth Secretariat and other strategic partners

As noted above, the development of a NAP does not automatically translate into improvements in the socioeconomic and political welfare of women, and lack of implementation, action and accountability have been identified as the primary obstacles to concrete changes in women's lives (Butler et al. 2010). Thus a central role that the Commonwealth Secretariat and other strategic partners can play is to promote shared understandings of the purpose of NAPs as well as illustrate the problems faced and develop strategies to minimise them in newly implementing countries. Toward this end, the Secretariat can serve as a resource centre, documenting and sharing information on best practices through regular meetings with leadership across the Commonwealth. It can also help in the development of widely shared indicators and actions to address the central tenets of UNSCR 1325. The use of the same indicators across different countries would strengthen information collection and enhance comparability of data and measurement of progress in various contexts.

#### Address cultural beliefs

Chief among the obstacles noted are cultural beliefs (held by both women and men) that circumscribe women's roles. In many of the countries discussed earlier, following conflict men often expected women to retreat from the very public roles they might have played in advocating for peace and return to the home. In other cases, women themselves lacked confidence or also believed that their roles should be more private. Contextual implementation of NAPs is key to addressing some of these barriers. It would therefore be useful for the Secretariat and other international partners to identify key local partners and resource persons within each country who are familiar with its culture, can articulate some of the most serious constraints facing women and can brainstorm ways to address them. Such sessions can result in the creation of specific indicators as well as actions to effectively counter the barriers that culture can pose. Through the identification of areas of expertise, and drawing on the knowledge

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of female and male activists who have a history of working within the country and a familiarity with the specific issues, these barriers can be greatly minimised and even overcome. The participation of civil society will be crucial, and the Secretariat and Commonwealth Foundation can aid in the development of mechanisms to ensure civil society is included at all levels from programme planning to the development of indicators, programme implementation, feedback and modification.

#### **Address structural inequalities: economic opportunities**

While 1325 refers explicitly to the protection and empowerment of vulnerable persons, it does not outline all the various sources of this vulnerability. Where the Secretariat and other partners can be instrumental is in elucidating these specific vulnerabilities and in facilitating information sharing through the collation of constraints faced and best practices geared toward addressing these issues. For example, where women's vulnerability and lack of empowerment is rooted in comparatively few economic opportunities, one strategy could be to identify appropriate income-generating opportunities that enable women to be financially independent. This could include research directed toward finding new opportunities that transcend gender-specific roles such as sewing, cooking and so on. In countries recovering from conflict, war-affected women – including survivors of sexual and gender-based violence – need projects that can help them be financially sustainable and do not simply reinforce the status quo. Research into best practices as well as into potentially viable new income-generating activities for women can help spark ideas across countries and identify where and how to target limited resources while at the same time providing indicators that can be used to track progress.

Furthermore, given that some countries or regions have similar economies, the compilation and sharing of success stories on economic activities can be especially useful. Possible examples include the 'cows of peace' programme. This small-scale dairy programme – implemented by Heifer International Project in Byumba Province, Rwanda, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources – targeted both female and male beneficiaries and has contributed to significantly improving livelihoods and fostering reconciliation in this area of the country (Mutamba & Izabiliza 2005).

#### **Address structural inequalities: laws**

Resolution 1325 calls for special measures to protect women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence. The causes of violence against women are complex and multi-dimensional and necessitate an approach that focuses on a wide range of interventions. One area in which intervention is crucial is the law. A number of the case studies provide evidence that national laws can hinder the implementation of 1325; thus countries should be assisted in identifying contradictory laws and in designing new gendered ones that incorporate 1325 based on information-sharing and best practices across nations. This includes strengthening the legal environment to fully prosecute any and all abuses against women, be it during war or peace. Information about best practices in countries that have made sincere efforts to make domestic

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laws align with 1325 protocols, as well as examples of ways in which countries have changed these laws to conform with international standards as elucidated in 1325, should be shared.

Another area in which the law can be made to serve the interests of women's equality is through the enactment of policies oriented toward increasing women's political representation. Given that 1325 does not necessarily address the underlying barriers that impede women's access to decision-making positions, countries could be assisted to identify and address these issues. The examples of Rwanda and Uganda provide evidence that affirmative action policies have been an effective approach in bringing women into political positions. However, research has also shown that while numbers are important effectiveness is even more so (Ballington & Karam 2005; UNIFEM 2006). To this end, information should be collected and best practices shared of how countries have been able to increase both women's representation as well as their effectiveness while in parliament. Such discussions can aid in the development of indicators that will track not just numbers but also the ability of women leaders to put in place gender-friendly laws and policies that advance women's rights.

### **Address monitoring and evaluation**

Many of the above points focus on ways to strengthen countries' implementation of NAPs since haphazard implementation can be almost as much a problem as lack of adoption. This should be a key focus area for the Secretariat, as should assisting member countries to develop NAPs. To this end, the Secretariat can work with partner countries to put in place incentives that encourage them to implement all aspects of the NAP. Monitoring and evaluation, often the weakest parts of project design, will be an important component of this. Through technical assistance, training and the collecting and sharing of information on how other countries are monitoring and evaluating their plans, the Secretariat can facilitate this process.

Another constraint that countries face is lack of resources. The Secretariat and other partners can provide the required technical and financial support to ensure countries can fulfil their commitments to the implementation of NAPs. Furthermore, tracking, publicising and sharing reports on countries' implementation progress could be one way to build accountability.

### **Develop a Commonwealth model for the adoption of NAPs**

It is essential for the Secretariat to create greater visibility on the adoption and implementation of NAPs. This can be attained by creating a Commonwealth model through identifying priorities, exploring the benefits of adopting NAPs and emphasising their important contributions to the well-being of society. A major benefit, for example, is the establishment of a conflict resolution framework towards the promotion of peace at all levels of decision-making. The regular collection and dissemination of good practices in the development of NAPs throughout the Commonwealth will enhance their implementation. The Commonwealth Secretariat can develop appropriate guidelines on NAPs and hold regular trainings with member states to share these.

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The Secretariat also needs to promote an intensive awareness-raising campaign in collaboration with strategic partners across member states, particularly in post-conflict countries and small states, to ensure that there is political commitment and that adequate human and financial resources are available for the full implementation of NAPs. Specific calendar events can be targeted to publicise NAPs and serve as a tool for peace-building and gender development. Moreover, the provision of financial and technical assistance to build human capacity in collaboration with strategic partners is pivotal to the plans' success.

### **Collaborate with other local and international actors**

A host of organisations exist with the mandate of monitoring UN and country implementation of 1325 as well as encouraging countries to develop NAPs. While the unique niche of the Secretariat is its work with Commonwealth countries, it can nevertheless collaborate with these groups, sharing information, resources and best practices that have worked in different contexts. Some of these groups include the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (NGOWG),<sup>1</sup> which launched an initiative in 2009 geared toward providing UN policy-makers with information on the challenges of implementing 1325 commitments for women in conflict-affected societies. Another organisation, PeaceWoman,<sup>2</sup> has also worked on holding the Security Council accountable for implementing 1325 in its specific country resolutions and co-produced a handbook on this issue in 2010: 'Women, peace and security handbook: compilation and analysis of United Nations Security Council resolution language'. Various other civil society organisations and country groups (such as 'Friends of 1325') are active in awareness raising and promotion of 1325 and the adoption of NAPs. Discovering areas of collaboration and information sharing can be one way to maximise the Secretariat's efforts.

### **Support women's inclusion in peace processes**

UNSCR 1325 calls for support of local peace initiatives, and yet this is one of the most under-served areas in terms of implementation. Given the evidence suggesting that women's engagement in conflict resolution is one component that helps facilitate the adoption of NAPs in countries currently experiencing or emerging from conflict, the Commonwealth Secretariat and other strategic partners can play a role in ensuring that national and international actors incorporate women's often locally based processes of conflict resolution. They can help to identify active women's organisations, provide assistance to enhance their conflict-resolution and peace-negotiating skills, and encourage states and relevant international actors to incorporate these women's groups in formal peace-building and conflict-resolution processes. In this way the Secretariat and other partners can play a central role in strengthening women's contribution and potentially increasing their well-being in the aftermath of conflict. They can also collect and share best practices in cases where countries' formal peace processes have incorporated and built on the advances made by local women's groups.

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The involvement of women in formal peace-building mechanisms can also influence DDR processes. As noted earlier, these for the most part have not integrated a gender perspective and have thus often failed to incorporate women effectively or promote their well-being.

### **Work with countries at peace to prevent conflict and engender peacekeeping**

Being at peace does not necessarily mean freedom from conflict as conflict can take several forms including barriers to women's access to resources, ethnic clashes, high levels of violence crime and the like. Moreover, given evidence that even when women are involved in peace-building efforts at the local or informal levels they fail to be incorporated into more formal efforts, the development of indicators on the protection of women and especially their inclusion in peace-building can serve as a surveillance mechanism to ensure countries have in place institutional structures that will facilitate women's involvement and integration should conflict occur. This is especially pressing in countries where internal unrest simmers and/or women face gendered forms of violence, such as domestic violence in the home or violence from drug trafficking – as is the case, for example, for some women in the Caribbean.

As already noted, the Secretariat can work with industrialised countries that are at peace to ensure that they build into their NAPs activities to support interventions such as ensuring more of those deployed go through training on gender sensitivity as well as increasing the overall numbers of women in the military through addressing domestic legislation that might impede women from enlisting in the first place.

## **Recommendations for Commonwealth member states**

### **Document lessons learned and best practices**

As mentioned earlier, only five Commonwealth countries have so far adopted NAPS. Ideally member countries yet to adopt NAPs should develop networks with these countries to learn and gain insights on good practices documented throughout the process. The lessons identified will serve as a good foundation to assist member countries towards the development and implementation of their own plans. Importantly, during the adoption of NAPs, new challenges and lessons identified should be documented and shared widely with relevant actors for future strategic intervention and the plans' implementation.

### **Take a multi-sectoral approach to the adoption of NAPs**

Countries should involve all relevant agencies in the development of their NAP without restricting participation to gender-specific ministries. Relevant government agencies should include those responsible for meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), social development programmes, the public sector, internal affairs, foreign affairs and security services (defence, military and police). The process should be transparent and participatory at all levels of governance and across all sectors.

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### **Collaborate with the private sector and civil society organisations**

Beyond the government architecture, member states should involve and collaborate with the private sector and civil society at the national, regional and international levels related to the adoption and implementation of NAPs. The private sector and civil society play a critical role in sensitising the public and wider society. Standardised reporting guidelines should be made available to external actors and strategic partners, in an effort to promote their active participation and contribution towards the adoption and implementation of NAPs.

### **Align reporting of NAPs with the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action**

Member states should be urged to present reports on the status and implementation of NAPs at Women's Affairs Ministers Meetings (WAMMs). Such reports should be aligned with the Commonwealth PoA and harmonised with standardised reporting on the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW and UN Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960. This should be complemented by regular briefings aligned with regional peace and security policies through active co-operation with multilateral and regional organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC), African Union (AU), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), European Union (EU) and UN.

### **Domesticate NAPs into national laws**

Member states should consider the domestication of NAPs into national laws and relevant national policies and other planning frameworks such as poverty reduction strategies and national security, gender development and peace-building plans. National laws and regulations associated with 1325 and its follow-up resolutions should apply to private entities holding government contracts or receiving financial support to ensure the effective implementation of NAPs.

### **Dedicate funds for the implementation of NAPs**

For successful adoption and implementation of NAPs, adequate resources are critical. There has been a call in this regard for a special fund similar to those that set aside resources for meeting the MDGs. There must be political will and commitment at the highest level of political leadership or else efforts to adopt and implement NAPs will not be easily realised. In Rwanda, for example, efforts for adoption of the NAP were centralised in the Presidency and all agencies were involved in its development and implementation. Furthermore, member states should call on institutions such as the UN and EU to support them with technical and financial resources towards developing NAPs.

### **Introduce accountability measures for NAPs**

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms including relevant indicators should be developed to effectively assess the implementation of NAPs with lines of accountability at all levels of decision-making. This can be achieved through periodic reporting

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to the legislature and to inter-state bodies regarding appropriate implementation, progress and results. With the support of international, regional and national organisations and institutions, member states can set up taskforces or equivalent structures to monitor, promote and evaluate the progress and results regarding the implementation of 1325 and its follow-up resolutions.

## Notes

1. For more information on the organisation, see their website: [www.womenpeacesecurity.org/about/](http://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/about/)
2. Information on PeaceWomen can be accessed at [www.peacewomen.org/](http://www.peacewomen.org/)

