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Mapping the “Women, Peace and Security” agenda in Latin America:

a comparison of UN National Action Plans

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GSUM

BRICS Policy Center
Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas BRICS

10 ANOS

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Executive Summary

Resolution 1325 was passed by the United Nations Security Council on October 31st, 2000, establishing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda. Since then, it became one of the main references for the development and strengthening of gender equality policies. While mapping the diffusion of the WPS Agenda in Latin America, this Policy Brief reflects on its regional contours, shedding light on how countries in the region are engaging with this global normative framework. Drawing on an analysis of the National Action Plans (NAPs) adopted to date by Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico, we show how the WPS agenda is being adopted in these different contexts, outlining their differences and similarities. The mapping and analysis of the NAPs are organized around three main aspects: (i) their drafting process and the actors involved; (ii) their content, objectives and envisaged measures; and (iii) their implementation and monitoring strategies. The goal is to offer a general diagnosis of national engagements with the agenda, summarizing the main strengths, limitations, and recommendations to move WPS objectives forward in the region.

Summary

Mapping the “Women, Peace and Security” agenda in Latin America: a comparison of UN National Action Plans

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1. Introduction[1]

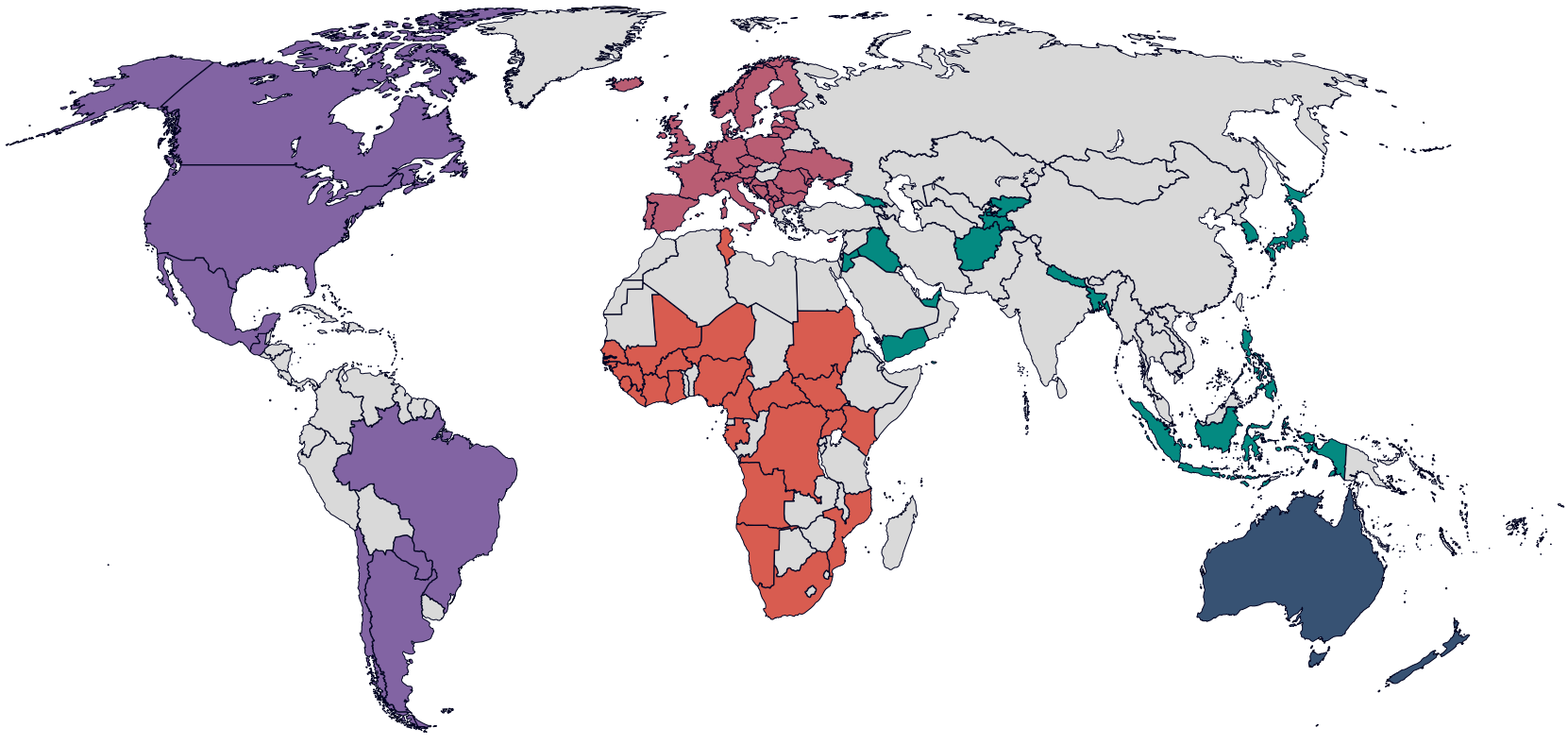
United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 was adopted on October 31st, 2000. Since then, it became one of the main references for the development and strengthening of gender equality policies in the face of contemporary security challenges. From 2008 to 2019, nine additional resolutions have been adopted by the UNSC to complement and strengthen the normative and programmatic framework of Resolution 1325: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2447 (2019), and 2493 (2019). This set of documents, which make up the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, aims to propose measures and mechanisms for the promotion of gender-sensitive policies and practices, especially regarding the protection of women and girls and their equal and meaningful participation in areas related to peace and security. Two decades after its adoption, a reflection on the commitments of Latin American countries towards this agenda is in order.

The National Action Plans (NAPs) are normative instruments elaborated by states, defining objectives and strategies for the operationalization of WPS commitments. The content and scope of the NAPs can and should be adapted to suit particularities of each country and region. Currently, Latin America is one of the most under-represented regions in terms of NAP adoption. Among the 98 countries that have developed National Action Plans to promote the implementation of Resolution 1325 (2000), only about 7% are located in the region (DRUMOND; REBELO, 2020b).[2]

(1) This work was carried out with support from Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - Brazil (CAPES) - Funding Code 001 and Fundação Carlos Chagas Filho de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (FAPERJ), process number E26/010.001641/2019.

(2) The complete and updated list of approved NAPs to date is available at: https://1325naps.peacewomen.org/

National Action Plans (NAPs) of the WPS agenda adopted by 2021, by region



Source: prepared by the authors.

Until 2015, Chile was the only Latin American country to adopt a NAP. However, the 15-year anniversary of Resolution 1325 represented a turning point for the WPS agenda in the region, with the approval of the second Chilean NAP and the adoption of national plans in Argentina (2015), Paraguay (2015), Brazil (2017), El Salvador (2017) and Guatemala (2017). In January 2021, Mexico, the first country in the region to adopt a feminist foreign policy, launched its NAP. In parallel, Uruguay, Costa Rica, and Ecuador have announced that they are in the process of drafting their own NAPs (OUDRAAT et al., 2020, p. 2). In Colombia, on the other hand, successive national governments have shied away from committing to a plan, despite the demands of national and regional women’s movements. In the absence of a NAP, local organizations have been monitoring the implementation of Resolution 1325 while carrying out actions for advancing the WPS agenda in the country in partnership with civil society actors, local governments and the media (see box no. 1: The WPS Agenda in Colombia). Recently, the advancement of the agenda in the region has sparked the interest of different actors around the globe, including the United States Southern Command (US SOUTHCOM). With an eye towards future partnerships with countries in the region, it has commissioned a research to map how the WPS agenda has been integrated in the security sector in Latin American and the Caribbean countries (OUDRAAT et al., 2020, p. iii).

Box no. 1:

The WPS Agenda in Colombia

Colombia is a special case when it comes to the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Latin America, not only because the country still deals with an internal conflict and an ongoing peace process, but also because this topic is intersected by a very particular dynamic between women's social movements and the state. The country has never approved a NAP, and successive national governments have shown little willingness to do so despite the demands of women's movements. On the one hand, the international consolidation of the agenda in the 2000s occurred during the term of former president Álvaro Uribe. In line with his militaristic political project, the government has narrowed WPS commitments to women's inclusion in the Colombian Armed Forces. This limited focus "hijacked" the debate and alienated the engagement of civil society actors, who preferred to distance themselves from such interpretation.

During the mandates of former President Juan Manuel Santos, on the other hand, all eyes turned to the peace process with the former FARC-EP. This has refocused debates on the agenda towards the production and subsequent implementation of the peace agreement. In the Havana negotiations and implementation process, the WPS agenda provided women's organizations with a framework on which they could base their demands, with international support from the UN and countries such as Norway and Sweden. With this international normative backing, they were able to call for greater participation at the negotiation table and to ensure the adoption of a gender mainstreaming approach in the peace agreement.

While meandering its way through unusual paths, it can be said that the WPS agenda enjoys considerable engagement in the country thanks to the active contribution of civil society actors – and in particular due to the advocacy of feminist organizations such as Corporación Humanas, Red Nacional de Mujeres (RNM) and Corporación de Investigación y Acción Social y Económica (CIASE). The Colombian case shows the effects of exceptionally organized movements, with a high articulation capacity, acting at various levels – not only in large-scale structures, such as organization networks, networks of networks, platforms, etc. in large cities, but also present and active in local agendas, based on territorial claims.

Women's movements have two main crucial roles with regard to the WPS agenda in Colombia. The first concerns a monitoring function undertaken by organizations that gather and disseminate information on the government's engagement with the agenda. Coalición 1325, an initiative made up of national and regional organizations, is a case in point. It periodically publishes follow-up reports drawing on indicators established by the Security Council itself. In the absence of a NAP, their monitoring work serves as a tool to track where the country stands with regard to implementation (UN SECURITY COUNCIL, 2010).

The second role concerns the localization of the agenda conducted by initiatives that carry out awareness-raising on Resolution 1325 and create mechanisms to advance its implementation at subnational levels, through the development of local action plans or other forms of district-level policies and legislations. The latest follow-up report on the WPS agenda particularly highlights the action of the RNM with local organizations in these efforts. It defines localization as "the process that articulates, at the territorial level, civil society, the media, governments, corporations and public entities, among other key actors of local governance, to advance the design and development of public policies committed to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda" (DELGADO, 2020, p. 239). Through these localization strategies a range of partnerships have been developed between national and regional organizations in several Colombian departments, such as Cauca, Tolima, and Bolivar.

It is worth noting that the civil society actors involved with the WPS agenda have not given up on advocating for a NAP in Colombia. In the run-up to the 2022 elections, organizations involved with the agenda prepared their own NAP proposal, to be presented to the next elected president. This illustrates the strength of women's movements in the country. Thus, it is not a stretch to say that they are the ones who have breathed life into the agenda in the country.

If, on the one hand, the recent proliferation of NAPs might reveal the increasing regional engagement with the WPS agenda, on the other hand, its implementation continues to face substantial challenges, particularly in the face of the crisis of multilateralism and the weakening of regional integration processes. The dismantling of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), as well as the decision of Brazil, the largest Latin American country, to suspend its participation in the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) point to a scenario of fragmentation and instability in regional dynamics. This begs important questions on the political willingness of Latin American countries to engage with the WPS agenda, elaborate NAPs and advance regional cooperation efforts on the matter. In contrast to other regions of the world that have developed Regional Action Plans[3], concerted initiatives to respond to common challenges and insecurities affecting women and girls in the region have yet to be seen.

With this in mind, this Policy Brief aims to map and systematize the diffusion of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in Latin America. We reflect on its regional contours while shedding light on how countries in the region are engaging with this global normative framework. Drawing on an analysis of the National Action Plans (NAPs) adopted to date in the region (Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico), we show how the WPS agenda is being translated in these different contexts, outlining their differences and similarities. The mapping and analysis of the NAPs are organized around three main aspects: (i) their drafting process and the actors involved; (ii) their content, objectives and envisaged measures; and (iii) their implementation and monitoring strategies. The goal is to offer a general diagnosis of national engagements with the agenda, summarizing the main strengths, limitations, and recommendations to move WPS objectives forward in the region.

2. The National Action Plans (NAPs) of Latin America

The peace and security agenda has ambiguous contours in Latin America. Traditionally portrayed as a “zone of peace” (KACOWICZ, 1998), with no active traditional armed conflict, the region continues to grapple with the consequences of non-conventional armed violence, often related to the presence and confrontation of organized criminal groups, including drug cartels, gangs, and paramilitary militias (BUSTELO, 2016). With only 8% of the world’s population, Latin America concentrates a quarter of all global homicides (MUGGAH; AGUIRRE TOBÓN, 2018), in addition to high rates of violence against women.

The patterns of gender-based violence observed in the region have historically intersected with other systems of exclusion such as class, race, and ethnicity. Of the femicide cases recorded in 2020 in the country, 60% of the victims were Black women (FÓRUM BRASILEIRO DE SEGURANÇA PÚBLICA, 2021, p. 98). Indigenous and rural populations also face disproportionate levels of violence, with one in three Indigenous women experiencing sexual violence in their lifetime (ROSA, 2016). Exposure to sexual and physical violence is often exacerbated by the militarization of Indigenous areas and the presence of mining and other extractive activities in these territories. It is thus not surprising that Latin America is considered one of the most lethal regions in the world for environmental and human rights defenders as well (DANTAS,

(3) Regional Action Plans have been developed by the following regional mechanisms: African Union (2018-2028), European Union (2019-2024), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (2020), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (2018), Pacific Islands Forum (2012-2015), League of Arab States (2015-2030), Southern African Development Community (SADC) (2018-2022), among others. A complete list of approved RAPs is available at https://wpsfocalpointsnetwork.org/regional-action-plans/.

2021). It is important, therefore, to reflect on the historical and political context of the Latin American countries that have chosen to signal their commitment to the WPS agenda.

At the time of the approval of Resolution 1325, many countries of the region were experiencing the first decades of redemocratization and the reorganization of their political, social, and economic structures following years of military rule. El Salvador and Guatemala were also experiencing a moment of post-conflict reconstruction and recovery, after the signing of peace agreements that ended decades of internal armed conflicts. This entailed consolidating new constitutional frameworks and, to varying degrees, conducting security sector reforms (ESCOBAR, 2010), which included expanding women’s access to military careers (GIANNINI; FOLLY; LIMA, 2017). Particularly in the case of Brazil, Chile, and Argentina – countries historically involved in UN peacekeeping efforts since the late 1940s – the increasing attention to women’s participation in the armed forces resulted in part from the need to align domestic procedures with Security Council demands.

With the engagement of South American countries in the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) throughout the 2000s, initiatives aligned with Resolution 1325 have gained more space in the region. In 2008, for example, Argentina approved an action plan exclusively devoted to the integration of a gender perspective into activities related to peacekeeping operations (MARCHETTI, 2017). This plan comprises a series of gender equality measures, including the gradual opening of all positions to women and the development of maternity support policies, such as childcare (DONADIO, 2016, p. 28). At the time, the national training centers for peace operations in Argentina, Chile, and Brazil began to organize courses and trainings for their troops on issues related to gender mainstreaming. According to Donadio, these centers have been key players in the regional diffusion of the WPS agenda and have significantly improved their training modules with the assistance of civilian experts (DONADIO, 2016, p. 4–9). As a result, between 2010 and 2015, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay nearly doubled women’s deployment to peace operations, with a participation rate slightly above the global average of 31 percent (DONADIO, 2016, p. 19).

Despite the gradual progress on gender issues and women’s participation in peace and security activities in which these countries were involved (e.g., as participants in UN peacekeeping operations), a long road still needs to be traveled domestically on this and other issues, most notably when it comes to efforts to combat violence against women and other forms of gender insecurity and inequality. The adoption of NAPs by countries in the region should thus be considered against this backdrop.

Among the countries in the region, so far only seven have approved NAPs to formalize their WPS commitments: Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Mexico. Chile, which was the first to do so in 2009 (GOVERNMENT OF CHILE, 2009), has since launched a second, revised plan in March 2015, refining its initial efforts in light of additional UN parameters and resolutions[4]. In the same year, two other NAPs were adopted: in September, Argentina launched its first NAP, and, in December, Paraguay followed suit. The NAPs of Brazil, El Salvador, and Guatemala were published in 2017. The most recent one was approved in Mexico, in January 2021. In the following, we examine and juxtapose the main characteristics of these NAPs, with special emphasis on three aspects: (i) their elaboration processes and the actors involved; (ii) their content, objectives and envisaged measures; and (iii) their implementation and monitoring strategies.

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(4) In the absence of an explicit reference to the first Chilean plan, from now on we will refer to the country’s second NAP (GOVERNMENT OF CHILE, 2015).

(i) Elaboration Process

The first commitments towards the WPS agenda in the region were observed in the defense sector. In mid-2000s, Chile experienced an opening to gender discussions following the development of a plan to advance women’s inclusion in the armed forces and the appointment of Michelle Bachelet as minister of Defense (MARCHETTI, 2017). Bachelet continued to be instrumental in Chile’s pioneering work in this area during her two terms as President of Chile and later as Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women. Argentina, in turn, actively participated in the approval of Resolution 1325 as a non-permanent member of the Security Council and, as early as 2008, launched an action plan exclusively for the defense sector[5], entitled Plan of action in the area of defense for the effective implementation of a gender perspective in the framework of international peacekeeping operations (MARCHETTI, 2017).

Nonetheless, substantial progress on the matter only occurred when foreign affairs ministries became actively involved in furthering UNSC Resolution 1325 implementation (GIANNINI, 2016, p. 13). The cases of Brazil, Paraguay and Mexico illustrate this point. In these countries, the conception and elaboration of NAPs were the result of inter-ministerial initiatives coordinated by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFA). In Brazil, for example, a Working Group (WG) was formed, coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and also composed by the Ministries of Defense (including representatives of the three branches of the armed forces), of Justice and Public Security[6] and the Secretariat of Policies for Women (GOVERNMENT OF BRASIL, 2017, p. 34). Mexico also involved the Secretariat of Security and Citizen Protection, which, in fact, was the first to announce the plan, although the drafting process had been led by the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs (GOVERNMENT OF MEXICO, 2020b). In Chile, Argentina and Paraguay, other ministries such as Health, Education and Interior also took part in the elaboration process and/or were assigned with responsibilities for the implementation phase (see comparative table for complete list).

Similarly to Brazil, in El Salvador the drafting of the NAP occurred within the “National Committee for the Implementation of Resolution 1325,” an inter-institutional working group created in 2014 (GOVERNMENT OF EL SALVADOR, 2017, p. 23). This committee was led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in coordination with the Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women (ISDEMU, acronym in Spanish), an institution created by the government to formulate, execute and monitor public policies on gender equality, including the National Women’s Policy. In addition to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense, other actors were designated by the NAP to participate in the Implementation Committee, such as the Ministries of Justice and Public Security, Education, and Labor and Social Security (GOVERNMENT OF EL SALVADOR, 2017, p. 24). In the case of Guatemala, the process of developing a NAP began in 2012, five years before its approval, with the creation of the Inter-Institutional Panel on Women, Peace and Security (MIMPAZ, acronym in Spanish) – a mechanism composed of 14 state institutions, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the National Civil Police, the Ombudsman’s Office, the Presidential Commission against Discrimination and Racism, and the Indigenous Women’s Defender’s Office (GOVERNMENT OF GUATEMALA, 2017, p. 14).

Each country has tried, in its own way and according to its specific internal context, to include civil society in the elaboration process. In its two NAPs, Chile has involved representatives from non-governmental organizations, such as Corporación Humanas and Comunidad Mujer, and from academia, such

(5) In this regard, the 2015 NAP states that “[t]his Plan proposes several recommendations to implement the Resolution in the context of Argentina’s contribution of human resources to UN peacekeeping missions, and it has generated important normative reforms related to the defense sector and to the Armed Forces” (GOVERNMENT OF ARGENTINA, 2015, p. 10).
(6) Then called Ministry of Justice and Citizenship.

as Universidad de Chile, Universidad Arcis and FLACSO-Chile. Furthermore, “in both the Argentine and Paraguayan cases, consultations with civil society were held in order to obtain specialized knowledge on the subject” (GIANNINI, 2016, p. 15). In Argentina, the plan was conceived as a dynamic instrument open to adaptations; in parallel with the inter-ministerial activities, the MFA “began a process of contact and dialogue with civil society organizations and women’s organizations in order to know their proposals on the matter and [...] incorporate their input into the development of the National Action Plan” (GOVERNMENT OF ARGENTINA, 2015, p. 11). In Brazil, the inter-ministerial WG that led the design of the plan included the participation of UN Women and the Igarapé Institute – the only civil society organization included in the elaboration process (DRUMOND; REBELO, 2018).

In contrast with the low level of civil society engagement observed in the South American context, the NAPs of El Salvador and Guatemala stand out for the inclusion of local women’s organizations in their development. The Salvadoran NAP included the participation of the Prudencia Ayala Feminist Coalition, which brings together more than twenty women’s organizations and 70 independent feminists. In Guatemala, MIMPAZ received technical and logistical support from UN Women and the NGOs IEPADES *(Instituto de Enseñanza para el Desarrollo Sostenible)* and Impunity Watch. Although it was approved only in 2017, the first draft of the Guatemalan NAP went through a long process of consultations with civil society organizations, which began in 2013 (GOVERNMENT OF GUATEMALA, 2017, p. 13). The consulted organizations worked in a variety of areas related to women in conflict and post-conflict situations, transitional justice, and security. Other civil society proposals reached MIMPAZ in 2014 through the Alternative Action Plan for UN Security Council Resolution 1325, prepared by the Mesoamerican Women for Peace Alliance, composed of civil society organizations, such as the National Coordination of Widows of Guatemala (CONAVIGUA) and the Political Association of Mayan Women (MOLOJ) (GOVERNO DA GUATEMALA, 2017, p. 13).

When it comes to broader debates on the WPS agenda, some of these countries also interacted and collaborated with regional organizations, such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) (DONADIO, 2016; ECLAC, 2014), and international organizations, such as UN Women – e.g., through consultations and seminars for the exchange of experiences and good practices. In the case of El Salvador, the elaboration of the NAP counted with the technical and financial cooperation of the Chilean Embassy in El Salvador, UN Women and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) (GOVERNMENT OF EL SALVADOR, 2017, p. 23).

In the case of Mexico, the plan does not mention the participation of civil society actors and there are no reports from any organization on their involvement in the process. As already noted by feminist activists, this contradicts the ethos of the WPS agenda, which was originally conceived and spearheaded by civil society efforts (GARCIA; VELASCO UGALDE, 2021). The absence of civil society participation in the Mexican case also stands out for two main reasons. The first is the contradiction between the exclusion of civil society in the plan and its commitment to “promote the active participation” of these actors in the implementation phase (GOVERNMENT OF MÉXICO, 2021, p. 6). The plan assigns this task to the Intersectoral Working Group, composed of representatives from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, National Defense, Navy, Security and Citizen Protection, and the National Women’s Institute (INMUJERES, acronym in Spanish), as well as other competent bodies. Such ambivalence raises questions and concerns about the conditions for civil society participation in the implementation of a project on which they have not been consulted. There is no clarity about which organizations will be included and their space for dialogue and intervention. The second concerns the paradox between the exclusion of civil society actors and the so-called feminist foreign policy (FFP) promoted by Mexico, which became the first country

to embrace this approach in the Global South. The Mexican government’s decision to launch a feminist foreign policy, while applauded abroad, was received with moderate optimism, if not skepticism, by the domestic audience, and in particular by civil society organizations. Similar to what happened in the drafting of the NAP, there was no inclusion or consultation of civil society organizations in the definition of the Mexican FFP guidelines, nor were there provisions for the creation of official dialogue mechanisms for the monitoring and evaluation of its policies and principles. Furthermore, there is a misalignment between the government’s FFP and its domestic politics, which becomes clear, for example, in the rhetoric of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador and his insistent dismissal of feminist activists. Overall, content and practices of Mexican foreign policy also contradict the core principles of a feminist foreign policy. A key example is the militarization of the country’s Southern border, a source of serious human rights abuses against women, children, as well as sexual and gender minorities, as denounced by civil society organizations. These contradictions reveal not only a lack of dialogue between these actors, but also the absence of minimum conditions for it to prosper.

Box no. 2:

Mexico's Feminist Foreign Policy

In January 2020, Mexico adopted a feminist foreign policy (FFP). Its official announcement was made during the 31st Annual Meeting of Ambassadors and Consuls, although Foreign Secretary Marcelo Ebrard had already expressed the intention to adopt it a few months earlier, during the 74th UN General Assembly meeting. To be implemented between 2020-2024, the Mexican government describes it as a "distinctive policy", aligned with the country's ambitious multilateral policy and the government's commitment to gender equality (THOMPSON; AHMED; KHOKAR, 2021).

Although there is no detailed work plan on the country's FFP, Mexico presents five axes that guide it: (1) integrating a gender perspective and a feminist agenda into all aspects of Mexico's foreign policy; (2) achieving gender parity in the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs and conducting organizational reforms in support of gender equality in the workplace; (3) fighting all forms of gender-based violence; (4) ensuring that feminist leadership and the contributions of women – especially women from Indigenous groups, Afro-descendants and other historically excluded groups – to Mexico's foreign policy development are visible; and (5) pursuing an intersectional feminist approach in all foreign policy actions (GOVERNMENT OF MEXICO, 2020a).

With this launching, Mexico became the first country in the Global South and Latin America to adopt a feminist foreign policy. Until then, the FFPs adopted by countries of the Global North emphasized the allocation of resources to support development and gender equality programs. Some of them, such as France, have proposed a feminist diplomacy (THOMPSON; AHMED; KHOKAR, 2021). The adoption of a feminist foreign policy by a developing country sheds light on power asymmetries between the Global North and South, inciting reflections on what the priorities of a Global South FFP should be and the challenges for its implementation in countries with fewer financial resources.

Two years after its adoption, the results of the Mexican FFP are questionable. Within the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs, for example, there is no data to assess the progress of gender parity, since the number of women it employs is not recorded (INTERNACIONAL FEMINISTA, 2022a). In addition, the diplomatic body has not reported an increase in the number of women ambassadors (INTERNACIONAL FEMINISTA, 2022b). Although the Mexican diplomatic academy has published a paper on feminist foreign policy that emphasizes that it should be aligned with domestic policies (INSTITUTO MATÍAS ROMERO, 2020), Mexican activists have pointed out the inconsistency between official discourses and the president's stance towards the feminist movement in Mexico (DESLANDES, 2020). A few months ago, president Andrés Manuel López Obrador insisted on appointing as ambassador to Panama a collaborator accused of sexual harassment[7]. Available data on violence against women in the country is even more worrisome than the official discourse: femicides in Mexico increased by 4% in the first three years of the current government (BARRAGÁN, 2021).

Although Mexico's initiative to embrace a feminist foreign policy is applauded by its partners in multilateral forums, it remains to be seen whether the country will be able to accelerate its implementation in the next two years. Recently, Chile announced its intention to formulate a feminist foreign policy (URREJOLA, 2022). This might open an opportunity for both countries to develop South-South cooperation mechanisms devoted to advance a feminist-oriented agenda that is adapted to Latin America and capable of articulating national and international concerns. In leading a feminist foreign policy in the Global South, Mexico and Chile have the opportunity to show why and how this approach can go beyond development aid, adapting international instruments to their regional and national contexts and paving the way for innovations in their public policies.

(7) It was the Panamanian government that rejected the nomination, since the Mexican president refused to reconsider his decision while minimizing the stories of survivors (NÚÑEZ ESPEJEL; LÓPEZ PÉREZ, 2022).

In a nutshell, openness to civil society participation has varied significantly among Latin American countries and, in most cases, there is still a substantial amount of improvement to be made, particularly regarding the inclusion and assignment of roles to local civil society actors and the creation of mechanisms to enable their contribution in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of NAPs.

(ii) Content and Objectives

All seven NAPs use the initial part of the text to recognize the relevance of the agenda and to summarize the main national, regional and international normative frameworks on gender equality and women’s rights supported by each country – the main normative refence being, not surprisingly, UNSC Resolution 1325 and its sister resolutions. The only partial exception in this regard is Mexico that only lists its key normative frameworks in two annexes at the end of the document, without developing any contextualization for their inclusion.

In their presentation of their domestic context and pro-gender policies, South American countries have focused on outlining their defense reform processes and actions undertaken to integrate women into the armed forces. National constitutional and legal frameworks on gender issues are also brought to attention. Argentina, which invests the greatest part of its plan to present its domestic background, lists seventeen national laws dedicated to gender issues – e.g. Law no. 13,010, which deals with Women’s Political Rights, and Law no. 26,743 on gender identity. Chile, in its most recent plan, besides mentioning the 1980 Constitution and the creation of the National Institute for Human Rights, underlines the importance of the topic in Michelle Bachelet’s presidential program and dedicates the first pages to individual statements by the president and key ministers involved in the creation of the NAP[8]. Paraguay highlights adaptations to the penal, civil and electoral codes to strengthen the principle of gender equality rooted in its 1992 Constitution. These efforts were also backed up by its 2007 Military Personnel Statute. Finally, the Brazilian plan highlights, among other things, the creation of the first women’s police station in Latin America, in São Paulo, and the approval of the Maria da Penha Law, “recognized by the United Nations as one of the most advanced in the area [of domestic violence]” (GOVERNMENT OF BRAZIL, 2017, p. 30). In the case of Central American countries, the NAPs also recognize the recent past of internal conflict and its impacts on women and girls, the need for reparation and restitution of victims’ rights as well as the contemporary dimensions of public insecurity that affect these countries. The national legal frameworks evoked by the Salvadoran plan include the Five-Year Development Plan (2014-2019), which mainstreams a gender perspective in public policies on education, health, security, memory and peacebuilding; and the Special Comprehensive Law for a Life Free of Violence against Women (2010), which establishes an interdisciplinary, rights-based approach to the eradication of gender-based violence.

The Mexican NAP acknowledges the country’s FFP as part of its national normative framework, with an eye towards mainstreaming a gender-sensitive approach to its foreign policy agenda (GOVERNMENT OF MEXICO, 2021, p. 3). In addition to presenting previous measures undertaken by the armed forces to advance gender equality, the NAP also stresses “preventive approaches that seek to protect the population, guarantee the human rights of all people – particularly groups in vulnerable situations” as one of its main priorities (GOVERNMENT OF MEXICO, 2021, p. 3). Interestingly, the Spotlight Initiative, a campaign promoted by the United Nations and the European Union to combat violence against women, is emphasized. This mention is noteworthy since one of the goals of the Spotlight Initiative in

(8) Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Women and Gender Equity.

Mexico is the prevention and eradication of femicide. But if, on the one hand, this seems to acknowledge local contours of violence against women beyond traditional armed conflicts, on the other, it would be hasty to interpret it as an explicit attempt to adapt WPS frames to the national or regional context for two main reasons. First, the issue of femicides in Latin America is not mentioned anywhere in the document. Second, the NAP also lacks an in-depth discussion of gender-based violence in Mexico and its particular contours. Although the creation of specialized police forces for the prevention, investigation and punishment of violence against women is mentioned as one of its main envisioned actions, such units already exist in many parts of the country. In other words, despite having the opportunity to introduce innovative proposals to better respond to local concerns, the Mexican NAP shies away from doing so and remains ambiguous with regards to the recognition of gendered dimensions of violence and insecurity in the country.

The Inter-American Convention of Belém do Pará to prevent, punish, and eradicate violence against women is cited by all seven countries as a key regional document for the advancement of women’s rights[9]. Mentions to other international normative frameworks can also be found, including the UN Charter, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Rome Statute, and the Millennium Declaration. The historical contribution of these countries to UN peace operations is also highlighted: Brazil, for example, stresses its experience in cooperation projects for addressing sexual violence in Haiti, Guinea Bissau and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (GOVERNMENT OF BRAZIL, 2017, p. 32); and Argentina situates its participation in peacekeeping missions since 1958, emphasizing that the search for international peace and security is one of the pillars of its foreign policy (GOVERNMENT OF ARGENTINA, 2015, p. 9). In its annex, Mexico includes the United Nations Zero Tolerance Policy to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse by its staff, and the 2017 Voluntary Compact on Preventing and Addressing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse proposed by the UN Secretary-General to member states. Although Mexico’s participation in peace operations has been discrete, these commitments highlight the intention of the current government to increase its presence in such efforts.

El Salvador and Guatemala emphasize the adverse impacts of conflicts on women and girls as well as their national experiences with the inclusion and participation of women in peace processes. El Salvador’s NAP, for example, refers to the use of violence against women and girls as a “tool for destabilizing communities” and as a mechanism for “social control,” recognizing the need for measures to support survivors (GOVERNMENT OF EL SALVADOR, 2017, p. 11–12). This positions the NAP alongside domestic policies on transitional justice and victim reparation, including issues related to the forced disappearance of girls and boys. In this sense, the Salvadoran NAP recognizes the restitution of women’s human rights as a central dimension for the implementation of the WPS agenda at the domestic level. Moreover, by expressly identifying the complementary relationship between human and national security, the document recognizes the relevance of Resolution 1325 in addressing violence against women and girls arising from public insecurity (GOVERNMENT OF EL SALVADOR, 2017, p. 22).

Guatemala’s plan dedicates its fifth pillar specifically to reparation actions for women victims of human rights violations during the armed conflict. In addition to the creation and strengthening of specific programs aimed at legal, psychological, and psychosocial assistance to survivors and witness protection, the pillar includes as one of its strategic objectives actions for the dissemination of memory and the promotion of a reporting culture on women’s human rights violations (GOVERNMENT OF GUA-

(9) Brazil does not cite it directly but refers to its content.

TEMALA, 2017, p. 44). Another innovation brought by Guatemala’s NAP stands out: the adoption of an intersectional approach, which considers the overlap of gender with other axes of oppression, such as race, ethnicity and age. The document is explicit in this regard affirming that whenever it mobilizes the category “women,” its content refers to “all women as a group: mayas, garifunas, xincas and mestizas, at all stages of their life cycle” (GOVERNMENT OF GUATEMALA, 2017, p. 13). Guatemala’s NAP thus favors a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of the different social conditions in which violence and discrimination are produced and experienced while opening space for the recognition of specific structural vulnerabilities and discrimination experienced by Afrodescendant and Indigenous women. As a consequence, the protection of rights and identity of Indigenous peoples is embraced as a core component of the WPS agenda in Guatemala, which is particularly relevant considering how sexual violence was used as a weapon of war against Indigenous women during the civil war.[10]

The orientation of Latin American NAPs, i.e. whether the plan adopt an ‘inward’ or ‘outward’ looking policy orientation, thus varies from country to country. The general trend in South America is to adopt outward-facing NAPs, which are mostly concerned with their international engagement and foreign policy strategies. This is also the case in Mexico. By contrast, Central American plans have been developed with an inward-looking model, predominantly focusing on post-conflict reconstruction and other priorities at the domestic level. Importantly, by connecting Resolution 1325 with public security and women’s human rights, the NAPs of El Salvador and Guatemala challenge dominant WPS thinking rooted in traditional “peace” and “security” frames that are notably at odds with the insecurities and realities facing women and girls in the region (MEYER MCALEESE, 2019; DRUMOND; REBELO, 2020a).

Nonetheless, this distinction between inward- and outward-looking NAPs can be more nuanced in practice as attempts to respond to national needs and insecurities can also be found on the latter. In the cases of Argentina and Paraguay, for example, it is possible to identify greater levels of synergy between the domestic and international concerns (DRUMOND; REBELO, 2020b). The Argentine plan reveals a broader interpretation of the implementation of the agenda while embracing a more “comprehensive approach” towards peace that addresses vulnerabilities and insecurities beyond traditional conflict and post-conflict settings (GOVERNMENT OF ARGENTINA, 2015, p. 10). This perspective is reinforced with references to the provision of assistance and protection to vulnerable women and girls in circumstances of “socio-natural” and “socio-cultural” disasters. In this regard, the NAP pledges to “continue gender mainstreaming in the agencies in charge of providing assistance in situations of conflict and socio-natural disasters” (GOVERNMENT OF ARGENTINA, 2015, p. 19). A broader interpretation of the WPS agenda is also evident in the Paraguayan NAP’s commitment to gender perspectives in the structures of the Local Emergency Committees and in the National Risk Atlas, a mechanism created to inform public policies on disaster risk reduction and response. This initiative is vital for the development of gender-responsive strategies for natural disasters related to the Plata Basin, which mainly affect local women and girls from poor communities (DRUMOND; REBELO, 2020b, p. 474). These innovative strategies not only promote a more holistic understanding of the gendered dimensions of human (in)security, which are usually missing from first-generation NAPs, but also seem to offer promising avenues for effectively mainstreaming gender within national security debates (DRUMOND; REBELO, 2020b, p.474).

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(10) Guatemala’s *Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (CEH)* estimates that 88.7% of rape victims were Mayan women. In addition to rape, Mayan women’s bodies were also subjected to mutilation, sexual exploitation, forced sterilization, and forced abortion (CEH, 1999).

Commitments to include a gender perspective in peace and security policies – including in military training modules – are made explicit in all plans. They often appear either as a separate topic or as subtopics within other pillars. Amongst all WPS pillars, the participation pillar is the most recurring and prominent theme in Latin American NAPs – with the exception of the second Chilean NAP which devotes more attention to prevention issues. All countries commit to increasing the presence of women in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as in peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts[11]. With the exception of Chile, Guatemala and Mexico, the other countries also foresee measures to increase the access of women to the armed forces. The Chilean and Mexican plans only pledge to increase women’s participation in peace operations and do not mention the careers for women in the military sector more broadly[12].

And yet, in general, the NAPs that commit to include more women in peace operations disregard the fact that they first need to be fully integrated into the national forces for this goal to be achieved. Consequently, WPS commitments to deploy more women in peacekeeping missions cannot be divorced from broader discussions on their involvement in national military and police forces, and the challenges they face (DRUMOND; REBELO, 2018). In all of the analyzed cases, the emphasis on participation only concerns formal, descriptive participation, without serious engagement with the structural and institutional hurdles responsible for their underrepresentation in these spaces. The lack of measures to advance women’s full and effective participation and make these spaces more democratic, inclusive, and fair in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, and class are notable. Issues related to wage discrimination and decent working conditions, including sexual and other forms of gender-based harassment, are also ignored.

In the prevention pillar, efforts to tackle sexual violence emerge as a priority. Paraguay and Guatemala propose campaigns to combat and prevent gender-based violence and promote a culture of peace (GOVERNMENT OF PARAGUAY, 2015, p. 12; GOVERNMENT OF GUATEMALA, 2017, p. 56). Guatemala also includes measures to strengthen its reparation program, prioritizing women victims of sexual violence and networks that provide assistance and support for survivors (GOVERNMENT OF GUATEMALA, 2017, p. 57). El Salvador emphasizes the need for effective compliance with the National Zero Tolerance Policy in cases of sexual violence against girls and women committed by state agents. It also seeks to create a coordination mechanism to integrate 1325 commitments with the El Salvador Seguro Plan – aimed at confronting violence and criminality at the domestic level (GOVERNMENT OF EL SALVADOR, 2017, p. 29–30). In stark contrast, Brazil limits its commitments to the establishment of “early warning mechanisms to prevent gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict situations (GOVERNMENT OF BRAZIL, 2017, p. 53), ignoring the high rates of sexual violence, abuse and exploitation that affect women and girls in its territory and borders.

Chile, among other measures, mentions pre-deployment gender training to peacekeepers and the compilation of statistical information on cases of gender-based violence perpetrated during the deployment of national contingents to peace operations. In addition to efforts concerning sexual violence, the prevention pillar of the Chilean NAP recognizes the need for investing and fomenting academic research related to the WPS agenda (GOVERNMENT OF CHILE, 2015). The Mexican NAP, by its turn, highlights the need for capacity-building activities in “areas of prevention and attention to sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.” It also commits to “promote the training of police institutions in the prevention of violence against women and girls” and “create police forces specialized in the

(11) Argentina and Brazil specifically extend their commitment to support the women’s participation in leadership positions at the UN and other international organizations.
(12) Paraguay and El Salvador also include measures to increase the presence of women in police forces.

prevention, investigation and repression of crimes of violence against women.” (GOVERNMENT OF MEXICO, 2021, p. 17). Although Mexico adopts an outward-facing NAP, the inclusion of this domestic measure is certainly a positive step when it comes to adapting the WPS agenda to local needs.

The lack of connection between the Mexican NAP and the government’s feminist foreign policy begs further attention. In contrast to the above examples, its superficial contextual and normative discussions stand in striking contrast with the country’s commitment to support a feminist peace. With the exception of a brief mention to gender equality as a necessary condition for peace and sustainable development, there is no substantial discussion on how its content dovetails with feminist foreign policy principles. Indeed, the NAP mainly focuses on increasing the presence of women in peace operations, which is an elementary feature of the WPS agenda. While the decision to increase women’s participation in peace operations and to invest in gender training are certainly positive steps, these commitments were already underway before the NAP came into existence.

The Protection and Relief and Recovery pillars take different shapes in each of the NAPs. For Chile, the protection pillar emerges as a strategic objective to safeguard and protect the rights of girls and women in conflict and post-conflict zones. It unfolds into specific objectives, such as the application of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle and the diffusion of transitional justice. In terms of relief and recovery, Chile commits to strengthening its capacity for international humanitarian response while further developing its coordination mechanisms both at the regional and international levels. On the other hand, Brazil, Argentina, and Guatemala cover other protection measures, such as increasing women’s access to justice; strengthening mechanisms to end impunity for perpetrators of gender-based violence; providing support to survivors of sexual violence; and including gender-sensitive protection mechanisms in infrastructure projects.

Argentina and Brazil also commit to integrating a gender perspective in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) processes. The Argentine plan mentions gender-sensitive trainings on DDR issues with an eye towards identifying the specific needs of female ex-combatants (GOVERNMENT OF ARGENTINA, 2015, p. 18). Brazil seeks to “mainstream a gender perspective into the design and implementation of disarmament, demobilization, reinsertion and reintegration processes, as well as of economic and social development programs in post-conflict and/or humanitarian cooperation situations” (GOVERNMENT OF BRAZIL, 2017, p. 58). The Brazilian plan also commits to developing gender-sensitive humanitarian demining activities.

Guatemala’s and El Salvador’s plans are more geared toward public safety and citizenship issues. The Salvadoran NAP recognizes the need to promote assistance in cases of human rights violations of migrant women (GOVERNMENT OF EL SALVADOR, 2017, p. 30). It draws attention to the importance of developing institutional mechanisms for protecting the rights of women and girls who are victims of “social violence,” thus broadening the scope of protection beyond armed conflicts. It also expands the boundaries of traditional WPS by integrating activities to promote access to dignified and decent employment for women in conditions of social violence (GOVERNMENT OF EL SALVADOR, 2017, p. 30). This broader WPS approach thus makes a critical link between women’s security and poverty eradication.

Efforts to support gender mainstreaming in the security sector emerge as a key dimension of all seven NAPs. Argentina, Paraguay and El Salvador are committed to advance gender-sensitive perspectives in military training courses and in the provision of humanitarian aid. Despite its commitment to provide specific training on gender in varied capacity-building initiatives related to peace and security,

Chile does not mention specific commitments in this direction to military trainings more broadly. The Guatemalan Plan does not include specific mentions to the armed forces, but foresees training and capacity-building activities for national agencies and civil society leaders, including Indigenous organizations. Mexico’s gender mainstreaming activities are linked to its FFP and mainly concerned with the performance of Mexican personnel in peace missions[13]. The Mexican NAP also states that the country will promote a gender-sensitive perspective in all efforts to maintain and consolidate peace, including those carried out in its national territory. Brazil commits to promote capacity building on the WPS agenda for all personnel involved in peacebuilding situations (GOVERNMENT OF BRAZIL, 2017, p. 33), but does not mention how curricula and training materials will be adapted in this regard.

In a nutshell, the majority of the NAPs adopted in the region have focused on defense and foreign policy initiatives through narrow objectives, such as increasing women’s participation in peace processes and in peace operations. This narrow approach disregards a more holistic understanding of the WPS agenda, which recognizes how conflicts are critically embedded in unequal power relations, often sustained by traditional ideas and practices that facilitate a continuum of violence against women (DRUMOND; REBELO, 2018). Even though these countries do not fall into a traditional definition of armed conflict, sustainable peace cannot be achieved without actions to promote gender equality, eradicate violence against women and guarantee women’s rights. Future versions of these NAPs must therefore include innovative measures that move beyond traditional peace and security understandings and bring their focus closer to domestic and regional priorities and particularities.

(iii) Implementation and monitoring strategies

Not all Latin American NAPs include monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, such as milestones and indicators of progress, timeframes, and clear lines of responsibilities and delineation of tasks for each actor involved (see comparative chart)[14]. Except for Guatemala, all NAPs identify a specific timeframe for implementation[15], but not all of them stipulate a specific timeline for action within the established duration of the plan. While Chile establishes annual deadlines for most activities and Paraguay distributes its short-term objectives along the five-year duration of the plan, the same is not observed in the Argentine and Brazilian plans, for example.

The South American plans create inter-ministerial committees/councils or other follow-up mechanisms composed of representatives from various institutions involved in the implementation phase. These mechanisms are tasked with tracking and reporting on the progress through periodic assessments. Except for Paraguay, all NAPs commit to involve civil society representatives in this phase. Yet, it is not always clear how this engagement will be carried out. In the case of Mexico, it is also unclear under what conditions and in which circumstances civil society participation will occur. The only objective in which they are explicitly mentioned is in the creation of women peacebuilders networks envisioned by the plan (GOVERNMENT OF MEXICO, 2021, p. 7). Such effort, led by the *Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres* (INMUJERES)[16], began in 2019

(13) With regard to training for the armed forces, the NAP refers to human rights and gender training. However, this is not new. Following two decisions by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Mexico has been obliged to offer these trainings since 2010 and, according to feminist organizations, has not fulfilled its responsibility (for more information, see DATA CÍVICA; EQUIS JUSTICIA PARA LAS MUJERES; INTERSECTA, 2020).
(14) The first Chilean NAP had neither a specific timeframe nor indicators to measure its progress. This has been criticized by experts who have reported difficulties to track implementation of WPS goals in the country (MARCHETTI, 2017). This was reviewed and changed in the current second-generation NAP approved in 2015.
(15) The Chilean and the Argentine plan have been approved for a 3-year period; the Mexican plan, for a 4-year term; and the Paraguayan plan, for 5 years. The Brazilian NAP was initially approved for a period of 2 years, and in 2019 it was extended for another 4 years.
(16) INMUJERES is a Mexican government agency in charge of coordinating the national gender equality policy in state actions.

Comparative chart: National Action Plans adopted by Latin American countries

	Chile (2009)	Chile (2015)
President and internal political context at the time of NAP formulation	Michelle Bachelet (Socialist Party of Chile). Bachelet played a key role in advancing the agenda. A change of governemnt between approval and implementation undermined the first plan	Michelle Bachelet (Socialist Party of Chile). The second NAP seeks to further institutionalize the WPS agenda in the country. It is also an outcome of Bachelet’s leadership, now in her second term as president
Year of adoption	August 2009	March 2015
Timeframe	N/A	3 years
Institutions involved in the elaboration and/or with an assigned role in the implementation	Led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA); Ministry of Defense; and National Women’s Service. The Ministries of Education, Health, Planning (now social development), Army, Navy, Air Force, Carabineros, Investigation Police, National Defense Joint Chiefs, CECOPAC, Diplomatic Academy, and the National Academy of Political and Strategic Studies (ANEPE) also participated in the process	Ministries of Foreign Affairs, National Defense, Women and Gender Equality, Health, and Interior; National Academy of Political Studies; Strategic Chilean Center for Peace Operations
Participation of civil society and other national and international actors	*Corporación Humanas*; University of Chile; Arcis University; FLACSO-Chile	The National Institute of Human Rights; The Human Rights Center of the University of Chile; Regional Center for Human Rights; *Corporación Humanas; Comunidad Mujer*
Main Objectives/Pillars	(i) gender mainstreaming; (ii) rights; (iii) participation; (iv) coordination	(i) prevention; (ii) participation; (iii) protection; (iv) relief and recovery
Mentions to national, regional, and international normative frameworks/Other relevant background information	Chilean Constitution; CEDAW; Inter-American Convention of Belém do Pará; Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; Millennium Development Goals; Rome Statute; Resolutions 1325/1820; Chilean participation in peace operations; Women’s participation in the Armed Forces	Chilean Constitution; National Institute of Human Rights; Michelle Bachelet’s government plan; UN Charter; Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Inter-American Convention of Belém do Pará; Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; Rome Statute; Millennium Declaration; Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122; UN Women
Distribution of tasks among ministries	Yes	Yes
List of indicators	No	Yes
Monitoring Mechanisms	Yes. The monitoring will involve the Council of Ministers for equal opportunities (political body with annual sessions); Interministerial Committee (technical follow-up); Observatory (government and civil society members, with biannual sessions)	Yes. It will be headed by a cross-ministry committee consisting of representatives from the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and Gender Equity. The monitoring will also involve the creation of a civil society observatory on Resolution 1325
Allocated Budget	No	Each coordinating institution shall provide, in its annual budget, an entry allocated to financing the activities of the NAP. The Plan, however, does not specificy a budget for implementation.
Inward or outward looking?	Outward	Outward

	Argentina	Paraguay	Brazil
President and internal political context at the time of NAP formulation	Cristina Kirchner (Justicialist Party)	Horacio Cartes (Partido Colorado)	Dilma Rousseff (PT)/ Michel Temer (PMDB). Change of government halfway through the drafting process. The NAP was drafted and approved amidst a political crisis
Year of adoption	September 2015	December 2015	March 2017
Timeframe	3 years	Up to 5 years for short-term objectives	2 years (extended for another 4 years)
Institutions involved in the elaboration and/or with an assigned role in the implementation	Led by the MFA and the Ministry of Culture. The Ministries of Security, Justice and Human Rights, Interior and Transportation, Labor and Social Security, Education, Health, Economy and Public Finance, Defense, and the National Council of Women also participated in the process	Inter-institutional technical team with members from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Education and Culture, Interior, National Defense, Public Health and Social Welfare, Ministry of Women, Secretariat of National Emergency, Secretariat of Childhood and Adolescence, the Command of the Military Forces, CECOPAZ, The Military Academy and the National Police	Working group integrated by the MFA, Ministry of Defense (representatives of the 3 armed forces), Ministry of Justice and Public Security (then Ministry of Justice and Citizenship) and Human Rights
Participation of civil society and other national and international actors	The plan mentions dialogues with civil society organizations and women’s organizations.	The plan does not specify the nature of civil society participation. It states that civil society will participate in monitoring activities, but does not define how.	Igarapé Institute; UN Women Brazil
Main Objectives/ Pillars	(i) increasing the presence of women in peace missions and humanitarian assistance; (ii) increasing women’s political participation in the decision-making roles in all activities related to peace and security; (iii) mainstreaming gender in all peacebuilding activities; (iv) protecting the human rights of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings	The long-term goal is to contribute to the elimination of cultural barriers that prevent the women’s full participation in all areas of human society. Short-term objectives: (i) increasing women’s participation in decion-making; (ii) advancing culture of peace for conflict prevention; (iii) insterinstitutional, intersectoral, and international coordination to implement Resolution 1325; (iv) gender perspective	(i) Increasing the participation of Brazilian women in activities related to peace and security; (ii) Increasing Brazil’s contribution to combating gender violence and protecting girls and women in conflict situations (before, during and after); (iii) Strengthening the gender perspective; (iv) Increasing awareness about the WPS agenda in Brazil
Mentions to national, regional, and international normative frameworks/Other relevant background information	Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960; Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; CEDAW; Inter-American Convention of Belém do Pará; Constitution of Argentina; Several national laws; Argentine participation in peace operations.	Resolution 1325; CEDAW; Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; Inter-American Convention of Belém do Pará; Rome Statute; Paraguayan Constitution; Penal, Civil and Electoral Code; Military Personnel Statute	UN Charter; Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2242; Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; National Council of Women’s Rights; National Constitution (1988); Women’s Defense Police Station; National laws, including Maria da Penha Law on domestic violence; Secretariat of policies for women; National Conferences on Policies for Women (and related domestic National Plans)
Distribution of tasks among ministries	Yes	Yes	Yes
List of indicators	Yes	Yes	No
Monitoring Mechanisms	Yes. The Women’s Office (MFA) shall convene the National Council of Women and the Executive Ministries mentioned by the NAP to create and implement an interinstitutional monitoring and follow-up mechanism	Yes. Each Ministry will appoint 2 representatives to form the Interinstitutional Monitoring Committee, which, in partnership with civil society, will be the body responsible for monitoring the NAP by means of regular pre-arranged meetings	Yes. The NAP foresees the establishment of follow-up mechanisms with annual reports.
Allocated Budget	No	No	No
Inward or outward looking?	Mainly outward-looking with some actions aimed at the domestic realm	Both	Outward

	El Salvador	Guatemala	Mexico
President and internal political context at the time of NAP formulation	Salvador Sánchez Cerén (FMLN). The NAP was approved in the context of policy advancements on gender equality and violence against women	Jimmy Morales (National Convergence Front)	Andrés Manuel López Obrador (MORENA), the first president with a supposedly leftist platform. Obrador launched a Feminist Foreign Policy
Year of adoption	2017	2017	January 2021
Timeframe	5 years	Not specified	4 years (a revision is planned to 2024)
Institutions involved in the elaboration and/or with an assigned role in the implementation	Process led by the MFA in collaboration with ISDEMU (*Instituto Salvadorenho para el Desarrollo de la Mujer*)	Interinstitutional Panel on Women, Peace and Security (MIMPAZ), a mechanism composed of 14 state institutions, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Public Ministry, the Indigenous Women’s Public Defenders Office, among others	Presented as a joint effort by the Secretaries of Foreign Affairs, of Defense, of the Navy, of Security and Citizen Protection, and the National Women’s Institute (INMUJERES)
Participation of civil society and other national and international actors	Prudencia Ayala Feminist Coalition; UN Women; Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD); “Group of Friends of Resolution 1325”; and the Chilean Embassy in El Salvador	UN Women and the NGOs IEPADES (*Instituto de Enseñanza para el desarrollo sostenible*) and Impunity Watch	The participation of civil society in the elaboration of the Plan was not reported. There was an occasional participation by UN Women.
Main Objectives/ Pillars	(i) participation; (ii) prevention; (iii) protection; (iv) measures related to restitution of rights; (v) strengthening the implementation of Resolution1325	(i) women’s empowerment and participation; (ii) women’s training and development; (iii) respect for women’s human rights; (iv) women’s leadership for peacebuilding; (v) dignified and transformative reparation for women’s victims of human rights violations in conflict and post-conflict situations	Ten strategic objectives associated with the pillars of (i) prevention; (ii) participation; (iii) protection; (iv) relief and recovery
Mentions to national, regional, and international normative frameworks/Other relevant background information	CEDAW (1979), Inter-American Convention of Belém do Pará (1994); Statute of Rome (1998); Resolutions 1325,1820,1888,1889,1960,2106, 2122, 2242. Five-Year Development Plan 2014-2019 (national); Special Comprehensive Act for a violence-free life for women (2010); Equality, Equity and Eradication of Discrimination against Women Act (2011); National Equality Plan (2016-2020)	CEDAW (1979), Beijing Platform for Action, SDGs, resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2242, Rome Statute, Inter-American Convention of Belém do Pará, Inter-American Commission of Women, Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America, the Council of Ministers of Women of Central America, the Constitution of the Republic of Guatemala, Peace Agreements, the National Pact for Security and Justice, among others	Mexico’s Constitution; National laws and government programs; CEDAW; Inter-American Convention of Belém do Pará; United Nations Zero Tolerance Policy to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse by UN employees; Voluntary Compact between the Secretary-General and United Nations member states for the elimination of sexual exploitation and abuse, adopted in 2017, among others
Distribution of tasks among ministries	Yes	Yes	Yes
List of indicators	Yes	Yes	Yes
Monitoring Mechanisms	Yes. The Implementation Committee will be responsible for establishing mechanisms for monitoring and integrating the NAP with other institutions, by means of reports, making information about the plan available to civil society.	MIMPAZ is appointed as responsible for the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the NAP. The NAP mentions the existence of an M&E system, which is not presented in the document.	They are not explicitly stated in the NAP.
Allocated Budget	No	Each coordinating institution shall provide, in its annual budget, an entry allocated to financing the activities of the NAP. The Plan, however, does not specificy a budget for implementation.	Each coordinating institution shall provide, in its annual budget, an entry allocated to financing the activities of the NAP. The Plan, however, does not specificy a budget for implementation
Inward or outward looking?	Inward	Inward	Outward

and involves the work of local activists and organizations across the country. And yet, considering that this is a project that precedes the NAP, it is difficult to know whether and how it will be connected with its broader goals.

In terms of funding, the second Chilean NAP is the only one in South America to earmark specific funding for implementation. The document states that “Each coordinating institution shall provide, in its annual budget, an entry allocated to financing the activities which correspond thereto in accordance with the objectives of this Plan. Likewise, the participating institutions are recommended to consider the aforementioned entry” (GOVERNMENT OF CHILE, 2015, p. 25). Mexico and Guatemala also demand that coordinating institutions allocate the necessary resources for implementation in their budgets. In particular, the Mexican NAP mentions that it will seek “additional resources with strategic partners at the international level,” but it does not identify who is responsible for this task and how this funding cooperation will be carried out. Argentina mentions that each participating agency shall be responsible for managing the allocation of human and financial resources required for the implementation of the NAP at its own discretion (GOVERNMENT OF ARGENTINA, 2015, p. 25). And Paraguay also makes no binding commitment in this regard (GOVERNMENT OF PARAGUAY, 2015, p. 13). The Brazilian NAP does not even mention budgetary issues or funding mechanisms to support NAP activities. As already emphasized by WPS experts, adequate monitoring and funding are critical to high-impact NAPs (GIANNINI, 2016). Future revisions of these plans need to take this into consideration and include specific monitoring and evaluation tools, with clear indicators, timeline and budget lines for the realization of WPS goals.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

National Action Plans have become the main instrument for translating WPS global norms into the national context according to local priorities and concerns. This Policy Brief constitutes an attempt to put Latin America on the map of WPS debates, producing knowledge and engaging with the content of NAPs to gain perspective on whether and how countries in the region accept, interpret, and adopt the overall premises of the WPS framework.

Our analysis highlights the many and diverse ways in which Latin American countries have engaged with the WPS agenda. The majority of them have designed their NAPs as a foreign policy tool, focused mainly on increasing women’s participation in the armed forces and in peace operations. This was the case of South American countries and Mexico. El Salvador and Guatemala, on the other hand, have followed a different path, also observed in other post-conflict contexts where NAPs are more “inward-facing”, attuned with efforts to rebuild the social fabric weakened by the conflict.

This diversity reflects the adaptability of the WPS agenda, which can and should be adjusted to meet local needs and priorities. Yet, considering the alarming levels of insecurity and vulnerability that affect women and girls in the region, the lack of convergence and commitments on these issues indicate that coordinated and synergistic efforts to tackle these issues remain to be seen. In this regard, the silence on common gendered insecurities, such as disarmament, drug and human trafficking, persecution of women, human rights and environmental defenders, as well as forced migration is particularly striking (DRUMOND; REBELO, 2018; GIANNINI et al., 2018; DRUMOND; REBELO 2020b).

The divergent WPS approaches observed in the region and their disconnect from local needs and concerns can impact on decision-making processes, reinforcing the reticence on WPS-related debates in regional peace and security fora and the lack of synergy between the WPS agenda and domestic public

policies. This is of particular importance for countries that share borders and face common security challenges. For example, the WPS agenda has potential to open up spaces for gender-sensitive cooperation on migration and security policies among countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico.

Therefore, it is essential to encourage critical debates on the relevance of the agenda in relevant regional forums, such as the Organization of American States and Mercosur, in order to foster the development of gender-sensitive public policies on themes such as urban violence and public safety, trafficking of weapons, drugs and people, migration and refuge, human rights, natural disasters and climate change. We also emphasize the importance of demilitarizing the WPS agenda through more inclusive and comprehensive dialogues with other sectors and ministries that work on related topics, whether in the implementation of existing NAPs or in future review processes. The sharing of knowledge and experiences and the promotion of capacity building activities on the WPS agenda through workshops, training and awareness-raising activities are critical to build a critical mass to impact change and support more locally grounded contributions.

In addition to expanding its thematic scope, the implementation of the WPS agenda in Latin America must also pay attention to the development of intersectional methodologies that take seriously how women’s insecurities are shaped by class, race, ethnicity, dis/ability, creed and sexual orientation. In this sense, the active participation of civil society actors and movements is indispensable at all stages, from drafting to implementation and monitoring. Furthermore, our analysis reveals how NAPs are predominantly focused on national-level policies and machineries, neglecting the need for more local-level initiatives. A key strategy is thus to invest in localization programs involving local governments, community leaders and women’s grassroots organizations. These actors should be encouraged to take ownership of the agenda and actively participate in the development of Local Action Plans that respond more directly to the needs and demands of their communities. In this regard, a deeper and more systematic investigation of social initiatives on the WPS agenda in Colombia can help to advance our understanding of the different ways in which local civil society movements participate in these processes, providing critical insights that decenter the state as protagonist in WPS narratives.

Considering that lack of resources weakens the operationalization of WPS commitments and makes them more vulnerable to political changes, projects and initiatives aimed at increasing civil society engagement with the agenda are vital to ensure the fulfillment of and continued support to the agenda despite political transitions. The exclusion of non-governmental organizations and women’s movements, both during the elaboration and implementation of NAPs, has contributed to perpetuate the lack of knowledge of the WPS agenda among local actors outside governmental circles, which limits its transformative potential. As a result, the WPS agenda in Latin America remains a government-led enterprise that mostly involves political, military and academic elites, making it susceptible to cooptation and alien to the voices of Black, Indigenous, and rural women, who are under-represented in these spaces. It is therefore vitally important that Latin American women recognize themselves in and actively take ownership of the WPS agenda. As we watch the rise of authoritarian and militaristic leaderships in the region, the WPS agenda can provide a critical platform to preserve the hard-won progress on the fight against gender inequality.

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