

External evaluation of the Netherlands WPS 2016-2019 and WPS 2020 programmes

This external end-term evaluation of eight in-country programmes under the third Dutch Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) National Action Plan (NAP) 2016–2019 and its one-year extension, WPS NAP 2020, was commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and carried out by Itad, an independent, UK-based consulting company.

The eight countries in which the programmes were implemented were Afghanistan, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Iraq, Libya, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen. In each of these countries, one consortium consisting of Dutch NGOs, Dutch knowledge institutions and local NGOs was funded by the MFA. These eight programmes constituted only a part of Dutch WPS NAP III implementation, and focused on three specific objectives:

1. Enhanced protection of women and girls
2. Decrease of harmful gender norms
3. Equal leverage for women and girls in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, relief and recovery

It should be noted that limitations of low-quality documentation and a low number of independent sources mean findings are not robust evidence of outcome level change but instead findings and learning on issues of relevance, efficiency, coherence, safeguarding and ethics which are relevant to NAP IV and broader WPS programming going forward.

The programmes adopted a wide range of approaches in seeking to achieve these objectives, and were able to reach out to over 10 000 beneficiaries in the eight countries.

Beyond the direct impacts of the programmes, their implementation brought out four emerging good practices for the wider WPS community:

- Adopting a **broader and more nuanced approach to gender** in WPS: the overall WPS NAP III and the eight programmes sought to not only work with women and girls but also directly engaged with men and boys to transform gender norms. Programmes also took an intersectional approach to gender, thus nuancing and contextualising their work.
- **Broadening the range of WPS programming approaches and themes:** Through their diverse approaches, the programmes expanded the thematic scope of what WPS NAPs work on and which kinds of methodologies and activities are employed.
- Aligning and linking WPS NAP implementation with **national and local framework and processes:** Importantly, programmes by and large sought to link their implementation to local, sub-national, and national frameworks and processes rather than working separately from these, thus creating synergies, avoiding overlap and increasing institutional take-up and thus sustainability.
- Taking the need for **flexibility** seriously: All of the programmes had to adapt to shifting political and security dynamics, as well as the Covid-19 pandemic. This adaptability from the programme side and the flexibility afforded by the Dutch MFA is crucial to working in conflict-affected societies.

The evaluation also formulated recommendations for future WPS programming, including

- Strengthening the **consortium approach** by investing more into building partnerships and mapping synergies at the outset;
- Strengthening programme **design, monitoring, evaluation and learning** processes, including focusing more on how impacts are achieved, monitored and reported; and
- Sharpening the **thematic focus areas** by broadening the scope of protection work, approaching gender norm change systematically and finding realistic entry points for increasing leverage.