



COUNTRY BRIEF



WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE PHILIPPINES

NOVEMBER 2024

Photo: UN Women/Louie Pacardo

Overview

As one of the champion countries on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), the Philippines has integrated the WPS agenda in several national and subnational policy instruments responding to existing and emerging security challenges, such as armed conflict, terrorism, the illicit drug trade, human trafficking, climate change, cybersecurity and pandemics. Among these policy instruments, the government has adopted four iterations of a National Action Plan (NAP) on WPS (see below), including its inaugural NAP-WPS (2010-2016) in 2010, making it the first country in Asia to achieve this. The NAP-WPS has been localized in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) through the BARMM Regional Action Plan (RAP) on WPS, which has gone through three iterations, including the third-generation BARMM RAP-WPS 2023-2028 adopted in October 2023.

The Philippine Government has also endeavoured to ensure women's representation in peace processes leading to the appointment of women to critical positions. Notably, Professor Miriam Coronel-Ferrer became the first female chief peace negotiator in the world to sign a major peace accord. She was one of three women appointed to the six-member government negotiating panel with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, and one of the three women among the 12 signatories of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, signed in 2014.

Status of NAP-WPS

The fourth generation NAP (2023-2033) was adopted in December 2023. It emphasizes a "whole-of-nation" approach that collaborates across government, civil society and communities across four key pillars: empowerment, protection, promotion and monitoring, while also recognizing the need to engage and impact women in all their diverse and intersecting identities, especially those in conflict-affected and vulnerable areas. Since 2010 subsequent NAPs (2013-2016 and 2017-2022) have expanded on prior strategies, increasingly integrating emerging security issues like climate change, cybersecurity and counterterrorism.

These NAPs-WPS have supported various government initiatives, including, inter alia: a) Enhancing the capacities of women in conflict resolution, mediation and other peacebuilding work in their communities; b) Increasing the number of women and children's desks in police stations; c) Raising community awareness on UNSCR 1325; d) Advocating for women's inclusion in formal peace mechanisms and for their increased representation in governance and leadership positions; and e) The establishment of WPS mechanisms, such as the National Steering Committee (NSC) and Technical Working Group (TWG) on WPS, as well as policies on the integration of WPS in Gender and Development Plans and Budgets.

Priority Areas

• Strengthening Normative and Policy Frameworks

UN Women has been a longtime partner of the national government and the BARMM regional government (including its predecessor, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao) in strengthening the normative work on WPS including through policy and programme development. In providing technical support and accompaniment in the development of gender-responsive policies, such as the NAP-WPS 2023-2033 and the BARMM RAP-WPS 2023-2028, UN Women has also played a key role in advocating for multi-stakeholder participation, including the engagement of civil society actors, in the process. In 2024, UN Women ramped up its support for NAP-WPS implementation and localization by providing technical assistance to the NSC-WPS and the TWG on NAP-WPS in developing an Indicator Handbook to guide NAP-WPS monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning.



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• Increasing Women's Participation through Capacity-Building and Accompaniment of Women Peacebuilders

UN Women secures spaces for women-led and women's rights organizations to be consulted in the crafting of national and regional WPS policy instruments and provides technical assistance and accompaniment to women mediators in BARMM to support their meaningful participation in conflict prevention, resolution and recovery. UN Women takes a nuanced

approach in its provision of technical assistance, recognizing power differentials among different groups of women stemming from their intersecting identities and extending its support for those at the grassroots. Moreover, UN Women recognizes that capacity development for women mediators and other peacebuilders must run in parallel with efforts to secure seats and spaces for them in formal and informal conflict resolution and peacebuilding mechanisms at various levels, such as the Lupong Tagapamayapa (Barangay Justice Councils).

To that end, UN Women, in partnership with the BARMM Ministry of Public Order and Safety (MPOS), produced the Bangsamoro Women Mediation Agenda following extensive consultations with women mediators from across the region. The Agenda serves as a living document to support advocacy efforts for broader recognition and possibly for the accreditation of women mediators in BARMM. UN Women also collaborates with the Bangsamoro Peace Institute to offer the Advanced WPS Course, a two-part programme combining classroom learning and field sessions. Launched in 2023, the course aims to strengthen WPS capacities in BARMM and will continue with new sessions in late 2024 and early 2025.



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In the words of Sittie Janine M. Gamao: "To overcome my own fears, I think of myself not as babae lang (just a woman) or bata pa (too young), but as a peace officer doing her work."



- **Promoting Sustainable and Accessible Financing for WPS Work**

Recognizing that resourcing is crucial to the sustainability of WPS initiatives, UN Women promotes public financing of WPS through gender-responsive budgeting and planning (GRBP). In 2023, it commissioned a technical expert to undertake a three-country study, including in the Philippines, on the use of GRBP in WPS. The results of the study will inform upcoming capacity-development activities, in partnership with key government agencies at the country level and in BARMM.

UN Women also worked closely with the Department of Budget and Management in designing the Session “Investing in Impact: Financing Strategies for WPS Initiatives” of the International Conference on Women, Peace and Security, held in Manila in October 2024. UN Women also supports women-led and women’s rights organizations’ access to financing for their WPS work through the Women, Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) (further information provided below). Finally, UN Women supports women’s cooperatives in undertaking economic empowerment activities, such as social entrepreneurship, bolstering their capacity to sustain and self-finance their livelihood and peacebuilding work.

- **Generating Knowledge and Proof of Concept in Response to Emerging WPS Concerns**

UN Women pursues research to validate existing knowledge or to generate new knowledge that can inform and evidence policymaking and programming. Through the generation of knowledge products, it can disseminate good practices and lessons learned from the Philippines, including and especially from BARMM, on WPS. UN Women undertakes research on emerging threats and opportunities and develops proof of concept in responding to them through small-scale pilot activities. Among the topics on which it has done recent work are masculinities, cybersecurity and violent extremism, while climate, peace and security is an emerging area of concern on which it intends to do more work in the coming years. Some additional details on these issues are provided below:

- » **Cybersecurity**

After the adoption of its 4th NAP-WPS (2023 – 2033), the Philippines became the first country in Southeast Asia to recognize cybersecurity considerations as part of its WPS commitments. The NAP-WPS recognizes the importance of cybersecurity and includes specific action points on ensuring women’s meaningful representation, participation and leadership in cybersecurity planning, design, governance and law

enforcement efforts, including strengthening the capacities of women’s grassroots organizations, peacebuilders and human rights defenders on cybersecurity and digital peacebuilding. Cybersecurity is also mentioned in the BARMM RAP-WPS 2023-2028.

In stark contrast, the inaugural National Cybersecurity Plan 2023-2028, released by the Department of Information and Communications Technology in February 2024, is gender-blind in its formulation and is a low-hanging fruit for mainstreaming a WPS perspective.

- » **Climate, peace and security**

Given that the Philippines faces some of the world’s highest disaster risks and is located at the intersection of environmental threats (e.g. intensified storms, rising sea levels and resource scarcity), the country has adapted its NAP to address how climate change compounds risks for women in these settings. It specifically encourages women’s leadership in community-level climate adaptation strategies, and emphasizes empowering women to actively participate in climate resilience and resource management decisions, acknowledging that the interplay of climate change and conflict may aggravate insecurity, marginalization and inequalities.



Photo: UN Women/ Pairach Homtong

Government Stakeholders

- **National Steering Committee on Women, Peace and Security (NSC WPS)**

The NSC WPS was established in 2010 through Executive Order 865 as the main body entrusted with the updating and revision, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the NAP-WPS. A NAP-WPS TWG was subsequently formed, composed mainly of Gender and Development Focal Persons of key government bodies involved in NAP-WPS implementation.

- **Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU)**

OPAPRU is the chair of the NSC-WPS and is mandated to manage, direct, integrate and supervise the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Process, including initiatives that promote and reinforce national reconciliation and unity. The objectives of OPAPRU are as follows: 1) Embedding peace, reconciliation and unity in the social fabric; 2) Enhancing resilience for peace; and 3) Social, economic, and political re-engineering. It is also the lead agency in formulating and implementing the NAP-WPS and the Philippine National Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security. There is a pending proposal to create a Department of Peace out of OPAPRU.

- **The Philippine Commission on Women (PCW)**

The PCW is the vice-chair of the NSC-WPS and serves as the policymaking, advisory and coordinating body within the government that leads in the development of gender-responsive policies, advocacy, strategic technical assistance and in the monitoring and evaluation of plans and programmes on gender mainstreaming. Central to implementing the WPS agenda in the Philippines, PCW supports the integration of women's perspectives in peacebuilding, particularly through community leadership and conflict-resolution roles, focusing on conflict-affected areas, such as some regions in Mindanao, Southern Philippines. The PCW also works with civil society organizations (CSOs) to train women in peace processes and to develop local policies that empower them as peace leaders.

- **Bangsamoro Women Commission (BWC)**

The BWC is the counterpart of the PCW in BARMM and the penholder of the BARMM RAP-WPS. Established in 2020 through the Bangsamoro Autonomy Act No. 8, it is mandated to safeguard and promote women's rights, to ensure gender justice and to advance gender and development, including the inclusion of women at all levels of leadership and governance.

- **Other government stakeholders involved in WPS**

- » Department of Foreign Affairs
- » Department of Budget and Management
- » Bangsamoro Transition Authority
- » Ministry of Public Order and Safety
- » Ministry of Interior and Local Government

Civil Society Organization Stakeholders

- **Women Engaged in Action 1325 (WE Act 1325)**

WE Act 1325 — A coalition of CSOs, formed during the first NAP WPS consultation process, plays a key role in advancing the WPS agenda in the Philippines, helping to ensure the inclusion of local needs with inputs from women, youth and marginalized groups. One of its major initiatives is the PEACE-NAPWPS Agenda for consulting with regional and community stakeholders to refine national WPS strategies, particularly in conflict-affected areas like Mindanao.

- **Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund**

A United Nations global partnership and pooled funding mechanism, the WPHF supported 11 CSOs in the Philippines under its Phase I implementation (2022-2023) to access financing for conflict-prevention projects, and to create an enabling environment for inclusive and sustainable peace. For its Phase II (expected to start by end 2024), 9 CSOs will receive 12 grants to implement institutional capacity-building and/or programmatic activities in conflict prevention.



Photo: UN Women/Kris Ryan Zara

WPHF Phase I Recipients – Philippines 2024

ORGANIZATION	INITIATIVE
Agency for Technical Cooperation and development (ACTED) and United Youth of the Philippines-Women, Inc. (UnYPhil-Women)	Training 30 women-led CSOs in governance, advocacy and gender-sensitive WPS practices, focusing on administrative processes, conflict-response and transitional justice.
Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS)	Empowering 30 CSOs with conflict-prevention and peace-advocacy skills through training, mentoring and community dialogues on gender-responsive practices.
Maranao People Development Center (MARADECA)	Supporting internal gender audits, staff training and focus group discussions to enhance gender mainstreaming in organizational policies and programmes.
Pakigdait Alang sa Pag-Amoma sa Kalinaw, Inc.	Boosting institutional capacity with a women-in-faith programme, a strategic WPS plan and staff development through proposal writing and officer training.
Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID)	Strengthening institutional work on peace processes and promoting women's rights.
Balay Mindanaw Foundation Inc. (BMFI)	Equipping 150 women leaders and 20 journalists with advocacy skills to ensure accountability for WPS commitments through workshops and gender-focused publications.
Generation Peace Youth Network (GenPeace)	Supporting youth and women's organizations to advocate for WPS goals through capacity- building and a youth-led national peace forum.
Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute and WE Act 1325	Facilitating consensus and planning among 200 CSOs for the 2022-2028 WPS agenda
Nonviolent Peaceforce and League of Moro Women Organization Inc. (LMWOI)	Engaging 460 participants, including 80 ex-combatants, in conflict transformation, leadership training and gender-sensitive mediation processes.
Transforming Fragilities Inc. (TFI) and Local Mediators	Training 100 women mediators in participatory research, conflict prevention and resolution strategies to strengthen local peacebuilding efforts.
Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and United Youth for Peace and Development (UNYPAD)	Training 250 women leaders and 50 associations in leadership, peacebuilding, conflict analysis and early warning response in five BARMM municipalities.

Key Documents/Publications

- NAP on WPS (2023-2033): Philippines_ NAPWPS-2023-2033.pdf
- BARMM Regional Action Plan: Bangsamoro Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (RAP-WPS) 2023-2028.pdf

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