



POLICY BRIEF

Advancing Women, Peace and Security: lessons learned from the Caribbean



Photos: UN Women/MCO/Colombia/Tico Angulo

Overview

Our Secure Future¹ (OSF) and UN Women work with decision-makers, civil society, and other stakeholders across Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) to strengthen the enabling environment for effective peace and security policy development and implementation. With funding from OSF, OSF and UN Women's joint initiative, the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) National Action Plan (NAP) Academy, offers practical tools, technical expertise, and strategic cross-regional learning opportunities to strengthen the effectiveness and impact of WPS NAPs.²

This brief maps the opportunities and challenges of the inaugural WPS NAP development process in Trinidad and Tobago, highlighting the catalytic role that strategic regional convenings such as the 2024 NAP Academy play, and systematizes key lessons learned. Designed as a collaborative and adaptable model, the NAP Academy offers a pathway for other countries to take greater ownership of their WPS NAPs, highlighting effective means for advancing WPS through national planning and underscoring the importance of targeted investments and stakeholder engagement.

¹ Our Secure Future is a program administered by PAX sapiens, an organization preventing predictable global catastrophes through the creation of new systems of collective coordination that build a more peaceful world.

² The NAP Academy employs a three-pronged strategy to enhance the capacity of governments and civil society to advance the WPS agenda: Regional Convenings: Multi-country workshops that promote shared learning, regionally relevant policy solutions, and networking opportunities; Technical Assistance: Tailored, country-specific support that helps governments overcome barriers and institutionalize effective WPS frameworks, prioritizing long-term peer exchange and technical support.; Thought Leadership: Research, policy engagement, and innovation to support enduring leadership in NAP development and implementation.

UNSCR 1325 and the Expanding WPS Agenda

Since the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 in 2000, the normative framework for WPS has expanded beyond traditional contexts of armed conflict to address wider human security challenges, such as gang and gun violence, organized crime, resource-driven conflicts, and natural disasters. Governments articulate these issues through WPS National Action Plans, which embed a

coherent strategy across international, regional, and national obligations and commitments for prevention, participation, protection, and relief and recovery. In LAC, NAPs address a broad spectrum of intertwined priorities, including women's participation in security forces and peacekeeping, cybersecurity, climate change, preventive diplomacy and mediation, and support for women peacebuilders.

NAPs in the Americas and the Caribbean

NAPs across the region vary widely, ranging from those articulating a list of principles and objectives to more detailed plans that include coordination arrangements for implementing the WPS agenda, resources to finance implementation, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track progress towards fulfilling key performance indicators. In the Americas, 14 countries have adopted NAPs³ with some having multiple generations, while Trinidad and Tobago is the first to do so in the Caribbean.



Building a Policy Framework in the Caribbean Region

In May 2024, OSF and UN Women co-hosted the inaugural WPS NAP Academy in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, with the participation of 35 representatives from Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. Senior government officials from various national ministries, including security, social development, health, and foreign affairs, as well as civil society leaders working on violence prevention, human rights, and access to justice, attended. The participation of senior representatives from the CARICOM Secretariat, the intergovernmental organization of the Caribbean Community, helped frame the discussions in a broader regional context. With its practical focus

on key aspects of NAP development—women's leadership in peace and security, stakeholder mapping, cultivating political will, results-based management, and institutional coordination—the Academy served as an important catalyst for the development of WPS NAPs in the Caribbean region. Due to the NAP Academy, Trinidad and Tobago was better prepared to develop and launch its first NAP in March 2025, the first of its kind in the region. It also supported Barbados, Guyana and Jamaica in developing roadmaps to advance their respective WPS NAPs and yielded concrete steps for a Regional WPS Approach under the auspices of CARICOM.

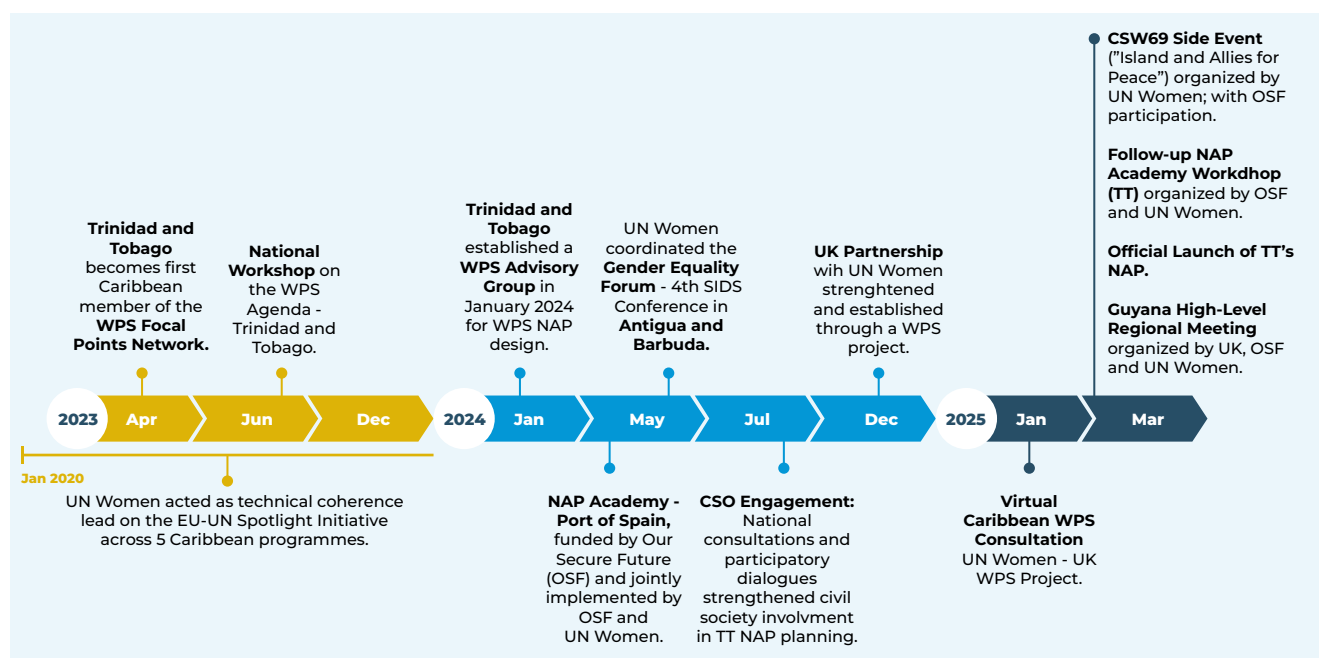
³ 14 countries from the Americas and the Caribbean region—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Ecuador, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States and Canada.

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

The creation of national policies, such as WPS NAPs, is the result of living processes that require a range of complementary and reinforcing efforts. The following are some of the best practices and lessons learned from the development and launch

of the Trinidad and Tobago WPS NAP, with a focus on the NAP Academy and surrounding key efforts. Together, these milestones created the conditions for more strategic engagement and provided a solid foundation for developing a National Action Plan.

Graph. The Trinidad and Tobago WPS NAP policy development process, key milestones and stakeholders.



1. Building political will and leveraging a broad slate of peace and security stakeholders

Building political will and momentum is critical, especially in contexts where there is low awareness of the WPS agenda, competing policy priorities, and/or weak institutional infrastructure. In Trinidad and Tobago, the road to launching a WPS NAP was a years-long process, requiring specific focus on building awareness of the WPS agenda and cultivating political will to advance it. In 2022, the Trinidad and Tobago government initiated discussions with international partners, including UN Women and the Government of Canada, on the relevance of

consolidating WPS efforts in the country. These initial conversations led to a national workshop on WPS, Trinidad and Tobago's membership in the WPS Global Focal Points Network, and the launch of a high-level multi-stakeholder task force on WPS.

Critically, the task force expanded government representation to include the Ministries of National Security and the Judiciary. Engaging institutions beyond those with traditional gender mandates underscores the centrality of the WPS agenda

to broader peace and security policy. In doing so, it enables the integration of key sectoral priorities, such as justice reform and security sector governance, into WPS policymaking. At the same time, it fosters cross-ministerial political will and technical cooperation for the development of

NAPs. This inclusive approach set a benchmark for the inclusion of regional stakeholders such as CARICOM's Foreign and Community Relations division and the Implementation Agency for Crime and Security in the regional NAP Academy.



2. Consolidating momentum and expanding the support base

Once initial consultations have taken place and dedicated roles to lead NAP development efforts have been identified, further steps are required to consolidate the momentum created and advance the process. Advancing the conversation from a small number of key constituents, such as the multistakeholder task force on WPS in Trinidad and Tobago, to a wider range of actors that includes additional government institutions, civil society, academia and international partners is essential. This expansion increases ownership and strengthens buy-in and political will for NAPs. It likewise provides technical expertise and insights to enhance the responsiveness and effectiveness of NAPs.

In April 2023, Trinidad and Tobago became the first country in the Caribbean to join the Women,

Peace and Security (WPS) Focal Points Network, signaling its political commitment to the WPS agenda. Following a national WPS workshop in June 2023, over 100 representatives from civil society, government and academia convened, leading to the establishment of a WPS Advisory Group in January 2024. Important to note, the advisory group did not include civil society, which limited the comprehensiveness of perspectives throughout the NAP drafting process. Additionally, the group comprised high-level representatives, whose limited availability hindered active participation and ownership of NAP development. These lessons highlight the importance of inclusive structures, practical leadership, and realistic engagement models.



3. Translating commitment into strategy: the NAP Academy

Once political will has been established and an inclusive process is underway, a NAP Academy can play a critical role in helping national stakeholders develop and finalize a NAP. The NAP Academy provides an important platform to address knowledge and process gaps by offering expert-led sessions and practical tools. It is also an environment where participants can engage in in-depth discussions on key WPS topics while facilitating peer exchange with diverse countries. Beyond content delivery and networking, the NAP

Academy is an opportunity to identify remaining gaps, define concrete actions, and assign responsibilities for specific parts of the process and outputs. If a country has already developed a draft of its NAP, the Academy also serves as an expert review, providing feedback and guidance on next steps.

The NAP Academy held in Trinidad and Tobago in May 2024 directly addressed the gaps identified by the WPS Advisory Group,

providing tailored technical assistance on NAP design, implementation, and multi-stakeholder coordination. The sessions clarified the planning process, introduced practical tools, and facilitated peer learning that defined roles, sequencing,

and priority actions. The draft framework that Trinidad and Tobago developed during the NAP Academy was later refined and integrated into their final NAP.



4. Launching a WPS NAP: not an end but a beginning

The launch of a WPS NAP marks the beginning of a new and important stage: implementation.

While each stakeholder implements their assigned responsibility outlined in the NAP, maintaining coordination and political will is essential. Ongoing technical support, such as that provided by Our Secure Future and UN Women, is key to (i) building and sustaining momentum; (ii) mobilizing national and international stakeholders; (iii) facilitating the exchange of experiences and best practices; and (iv) providing technical assistance and capacity building to address specific knowledge and implementation gaps.

In February 2025, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago approved its first WPS NAP. A high-level

technical workshop, hosted by the Gender and Child Affairs Division at the Office of the Prime Minister, Our Secure Future, and UN Women, was held thereafter to finalize strategies for its implementation. The workshop convened over 20 government-appointed focal points from ministries and agencies, along with representatives from the Tobago House of Assembly, civil society organizations, youth groups, and faith-based actors, which reinforced an inclusive, whole-of-society approach. Immediately following the workshop, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago officially launched its National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security with the participation of over 60 key stakeholders from government, civil society, and international organizations.



5. The NAP Academy as a catalyst for further regional engagement

Convening multi-country stakeholders presents a strategic opportunity to identify shared challenges, opportunities, and policy solutions on a regional scale.

Notably, the NAP Academy in Trinidad and Tobago catalyzed regional engagement. Following the Academy, the CARICOM Secretariat expressed support for an initiative to develop a Caribbean regional approach to Women, Peace and Security, as well as the appointment of a WPS Envoy to enhance advocacy and coordination on WPS issues. Such

proposals would reinforce the groundwork laid by the region and through the NAP Academy to promote coordinated regional progress. A regional approach also enables joint responses to transnational threats, such as climate change, organized crime, and human trafficking, while offering a platform for sharing technical expertise, facilitating joint training, and promoting cost-effective implementation of the WPS agenda.

Other Cross-Cutting Lessons Learned

1. Strategic communication and public visibility must begin early

A key lesson from the Trinidad and Tobago experience is the importance of sustained public communication throughout the NAP development process. Limited outreach ahead of the official launch, due mainly to the timing of national elections, meant that key constituencies were not adequately informed or engaged. While press releases were issued for different milestones,

earlier visibility could have generated greater public awareness, strengthened accountability, and built broader support for the WPS agenda. Future processes should prioritize effective communication strategies from the outset, utilizing multiple platforms and stakeholders to amplify the work and encourage national ownership.

2. Bridging government and civil society priorities through inclusive spaces

The development of the WPS National Action Plan in Trinidad and Tobago encountered a common challenge to many national WPS processes: aligning the government and civil society's priorities, particularly women's organizations and grassroots movements. While the overall process was consultative, formal engagement with civil society was introduced later in the NAP development timeline and, as a result, opportunities for early, structured input and agenda-setting by civil society were limited.

Although this dynamic was not unique to Trinidad and Tobago, the NAP Academy proved to be a valuable space to begin bridging this gap. By fostering open dialogue and collective reflection among stakeholders, the workshop helped to build mutual understanding and reaffirmed the necessity of embedding inclusive, participatory approaches throughout the NAP process. It also demonstrated the role of structured technical spaces in reinforcing the value of civil society engagement—not as an add-on, but as a foundational element of a legitimate and sustainable NAP.

3. Costing and operational planning must be built in from the start

A critical lesson from the NAP development process in Trinidad and Tobago is the importance of integrating costing and operational planning from the very beginning. While the NAP successfully outlined key priorities, actions, and institutional responsibilities, the limited timeline for its finalization—coinciding with the national election calendar—meant that no dedicated costing or budgeting exercise could be undertaken before its launch.

Although the March 2025 Implementation Workshop partially filled this gap by strengthening the capacity for intergovernmental coordination and monitoring, the absence of early financial planning constrained efforts to fully operationalize the plan. As such, future NAP processes should incorporate dedicated sessions on costing methodologies, resource mobilization strategies, and operational planning to ensure that commitments translate into implementable and sustainable actions.

Recommendations to Advance Efforts to Develop WPS NAPs

For Governments

- Identify a cross-section of institutional stakeholders to build the sustained political will for a NAP.
- Leverage international partnerships for technical assistance and financial support for the national WPS agenda.
- Apply High-Impact NAP methodology during NAP development.
- Integrate costing, funding mechanisms, monitoring frameworks, and resource mobilization from the outset to ensure effective and sustained implementation.
- Ensure civil society inclusion as early as possible in the process and design an inclusive participatory process. Civil Society is a “canary in the coal mine” on emerging security threats, and its inclusion can help identify security priorities early. Governments, as well as International Partners and multilaterals, should support the inclusion of civil society security priorities in the design of WPS National Action Plans.
- Convene the NAP Academy to fill in gaps, build capacities, and facilitate NAP design, drafting, and implementation, or any other related need.
- Join the WPS Focal Points Network to access peer learning and advocacy.
- Foster regional collaboration to identify common issues, drive policy regional coherence, and scale efforts.
- Launch early communications to secure public buy-in and national ownership.

For Civil Society

- Advocate for formalized roles in NAP drafting, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation through, for example, the establishment of advisory groups.
- Ensure broad civil society engagement, including grassroots organizations, women-led organizations, and marginalized groups.
- Advocate for diverse, meaningful, and institutionalized consultations to inform the NAP.
- Partner with key institutional stakeholders and champions during the development and implementation processes.
- Build coalitions with national and international networks advocating for the advancement of WPS Agendas, including the academy, to generate WPS-related knowledge and research.
- Identify lessons learned from other countries, particularly those in the same region, that can be applied to your NAP consultations and advocacy.

For International Partners

- Produce, document, and disseminate research, data, and policy briefs to enhance knowledge of gender-specific peace and security challenges in the region.
- Develop communications materials that help deconstruct high-level concepts and frameworks into actionable ideas, providing concrete support for WPS needs on the ground.

- Expand regional capacity-building efforts by hosting regional and local training, peer-learning convenings, and policy dialogues to foster the exchange of best practices, challenges, and innovative solutions among governments, civil society, and experts.
- Engage with traditional and non-traditional partners, including global and regional platforms such as the WPS Focal Points Network, global WPS experts like OSF, multilateral organizations like UN Women, and regional organizations.
- Partner with national institutional and civil society champions.
- Provide technical assistance as requested, with a focus on areas that prove to be challenging and where experiences from other NAPs can be helpful, including M&E, costing and operational planning, among others.
- Support civil society oversight mechanisms and promote their inclusion in NAP processes.



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It was drafted by Bautista Logioco and Lina Diaz from UN Women and Keri Zolman from OSF and received technical inputs from Sahana Dharmapuri and Luke Englebert from OSF, and from Delfina Garcia Hamilton and Jenille Maraj from UN Women. It was peer reviewed by Maria Veronica Espinel and copyedited by Guadalupe Del Carmen Valdés Morales, with design and layout by Teresa Lopez, all from UN Women.