

Occasional Paper

# Advancing Security through a Gender Lens: Building Capacity of International Security Practitioners



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## Introduction

The paper presents the executive education model at the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (DKI APCSS) in Honolulu, Hawaii, particularly its efforts to advance academic discourses and regional initiatives supporting the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda. DKI APCSS educates, connects, and empowers security practitioners to build partner capacity, shared understanding, and networks to enhance stability in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. Security sector development through gender inclusion has gained increased traction since the passage of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (October 2000), a landmark legal and political framework. To date, seventy-three countries have adopted National Action Plans (NAPs) to advance women's participation in efforts to build peace and security (Peace Women, n.d.).

The discussion here considers the evolving context of security and why gender matters in deepening our understanding of the Indo-Asia Pacific region in a complex global environment. Insights are shared on the opportunities and challenges of putting a gender lens on a security studies curricula in a multicultural academic milieu. The experience in working toward the fulfillment of the WPS agenda in the Indo-Asia Pacific region suggests that a greater impetus is needed to prioritize and effectively meet its objectives. Gender inclusion and mainstreaming are often constrained by socio-cultural, religious, political, economic and institutional barriers. Gender stereotypes also influence attitudes and perceptions about women's inclusion in peace and security. Enduring paradigm shifts must therefore be created through new knowledge and processes to reconstruct prior assumptions and reevaluate gender roles and impacts. The paper brings into sharp focus

the importance of collaborative practitioner-centered discourses on the linkages between gender and security to foster a transformative learning environment modeled in DKI APCSS executive education programs. It also provides recommendations to bolster the UNSCR1325 framework in the Indo-Asia Pacific region drawing on recommendations from a workshop titled “Addressing Institutional Barriers to Inclusion in the Security Sector.” The event was organized in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia in August 2016 with representation from twelve regional locations.

### **Understanding the Changing Context of Security through a Gender Lens**

The international landscape has experienced sweeping changes in the forms and patterns of insecurity in the past century. The nature of warfare itself has changed dramatically with revolutionary advances in technology. It is believed that the vast majority of casualties in the World Wars of the twentieth century were soldiers. In today’s battlefields, however, communities are experiencing the impacts of war and violence more directly and acutely than ever before. Civilians often represent the greatest number of casualties in modern day warfare (Epps, 2013). DKI APCSS recognizes that women and men are both primary and equal stakeholders in today’s security environment. While inter-state warfare has declined significantly since the World Wars and the Cold War era (Marshall and Cole, 2014), new security threats are emerging in different forms and manifestations. The traditional state-centric view of security has expanded to include community-centric concerns involving non-traditional threats. These include challenges such as global climate change, food insecurity, pandemics, forced displacement, the rise of non-state actors and transnational terrorist networks to name a few.

Consider non-state actors as an example, they thrive on human vulnerabilities rooted in economic and political alienation of individuals and groups. Evidence suggests that terrorist groups actively recruit men, women, youth and children to advance their goals. Vulnerable communities are radicalized, trained and armed to execute terrorist plans. The recruitment of women by terrorist and insurgent groups is neither unusual nor a new strategy. The defunct Liberation Tigers of the Tamil Eelam (Alexander, 2014) and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) provide many examples of the

instrumental role women from marginalized groups have played in spreading terror and destabilizing states (Maloney, 2014).<sup>1</sup>

The insecurities women experience are palpable in their limited access to healthcare, education and financial resources in many weak and fragile states. Data on female malnutrition; disparities in male and female literacy; participation levels in formal economic sectors, government and politics; preference for male offspring; female infanticide and honor killings; discriminatory legislation; and property ownership, among other discriminatory practices provide substantive evidence of systemic inequities (see for example, World Economic Forum, 2017; Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2017; UNDP, 2016). Because women often play the role of primary caregivers, societal norms, traditions and structures inhibiting their security affect people who rely on them in equal measure. Women's social, political and economic marginalization bears serious consequences for societal progress and state stability. In conflict and crisis conditions these vulnerabilities become even more acute. Consider the forced displacement of more than sixty-five million people uprooted by war, violence, and natural disasters across different parts of the world (UNHCR, n.d.). These figures are unprecedented. In many instances community displacement has become chronic and raises a number of complexities for victims as well as the states, societies and regions where they are located. The Indo-Asia Pacific region is home to 7.7 million displaced communities including 3.5 million refugees, 1.9 million internally displaced people and 1.4 million stateless people, mostly from Afghanistan and Myanmar (ibid.). Death, disease, hunger, poverty, family separation, psychological trauma, human trafficking, child labor, sexual violence and slavery, child brides, and radicalization are some of the chronic insecurities faced by these communities (Beech, 2017). Of relevance to this discussion, women and children together represent 80% of the world's displaced people (Women for Women, n.d.). They face a disproportionately higher risk of sexual violence and increased risk of domestic violence.

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander (2014) notes that women and girls comprised about 30% of LTTE militants. They were also known as Freedom Birds. One of them, a suicide bomber by the name of Dhanu assassinated the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Women and girls are estimated to make up about 30% of FARC recruits. Refer to the report by Maloney (2014).

71% of transnational victims of human trafficking are also women and girls (UNODC, 2016). A former UN Peacekeeping Commander, Major General Patrick Cammaert, relates that it may be more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier in a modern conflict zone (UN OHCHR, n.d.).

The World Health Organization (n.d.) estimates that about “60% of preventable maternal deaths, 53% of under-five deaths, and 45% of neo-natal deaths take place in settings of conflict, displacement, and natural disasters.” As the world witnesses rising sea levels, people are increasingly being displaced. Statistics show that women and children’s vulnerability to hydrological disasters is relatively higher in the Indo-Asia Pacific region. The Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004) killed four times as many women than men in India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka (McDonald, 2005). On average it killed three times more women than men in eleven countries in Asia (Enarson and Pease, 2016). In Bangladesh’s Cyclone Sidr (2007) women victims outnumbered men five to one (The World Bank, 2013). Women’s greater vulnerability to disasters is primarily due to gender differences in the capacity to cope and insufficient access to information. Women and girls often don’t know how to swim or climb trees due to cultural constraints. These limitations also prevent mothers from saving their children during a storm surge. Because women’s literacy levels are often lower, they are unable to read early warning alerts on social media and text messages. States that do not prioritize the empowerment of women with the skills and resources to cope with shocks are more likely to remain fragile over a longer period of time. Women represent a large proportion of their populations and are often significantly more vulnerable than men for the reasons described above. The lower the capacity of a community to resist and swiftly recover from natural and human-made disasters, the higher is the risk of state instability.

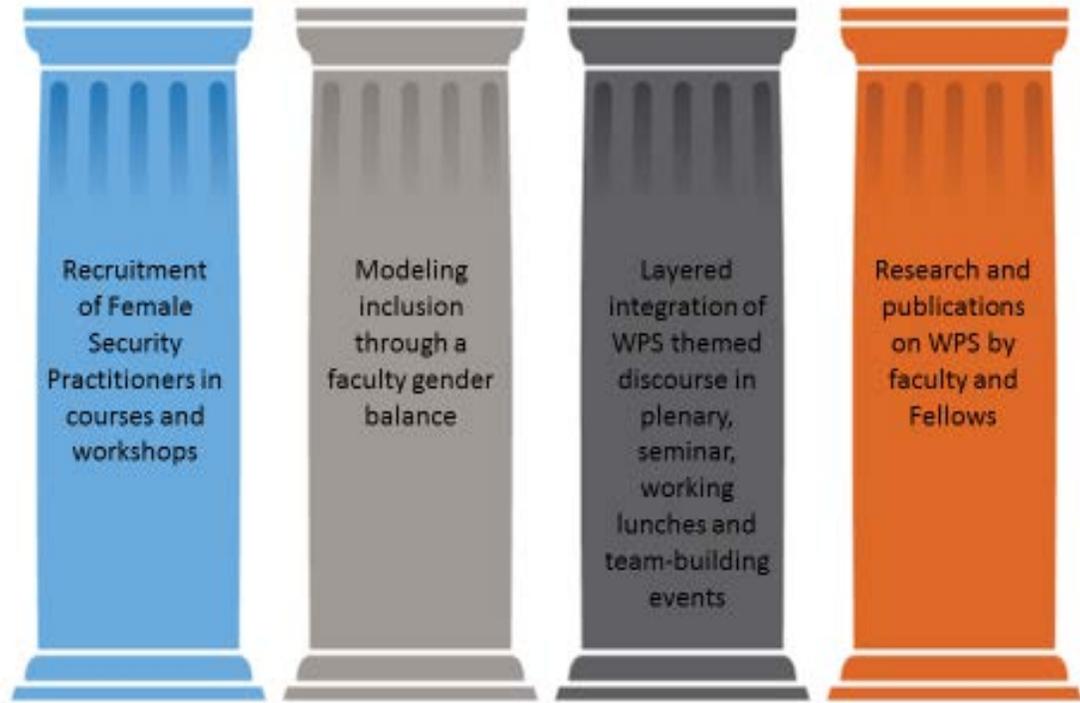
It is important to bear in mind that non-traditional threats in an increasingly interconnected world have the tendency to spillover rapidly beyond a nation’s borders. The contagion of insecurity and our limited capacity to prevent and manage them begs a greater understanding of the linkages between communities, states and international security. Human security has emerged as a critical measure of state stability (Gomez and Gasca, 2013). Working with this premise, one may argue that gaps in human security offer

opportunities for strategic intervention in building national, regional and international security. It is in this context that UNSCR1325 on Women, Peace and Security becomes relevant to the debate on the new thinking in security. Because women form a critical mass of affected communities in crises, conflict and disaster zones, and because they are acutely aware of the concerns of vulnerable and marginalized communities -- children, the elderly, infirm and disabled -- integrating their perspective in security policies is imperative for effective responses and comprehensive solutions to complex problems.

### **Women, Peace and Security at DKI APCSS: Opportunities and Challenges**

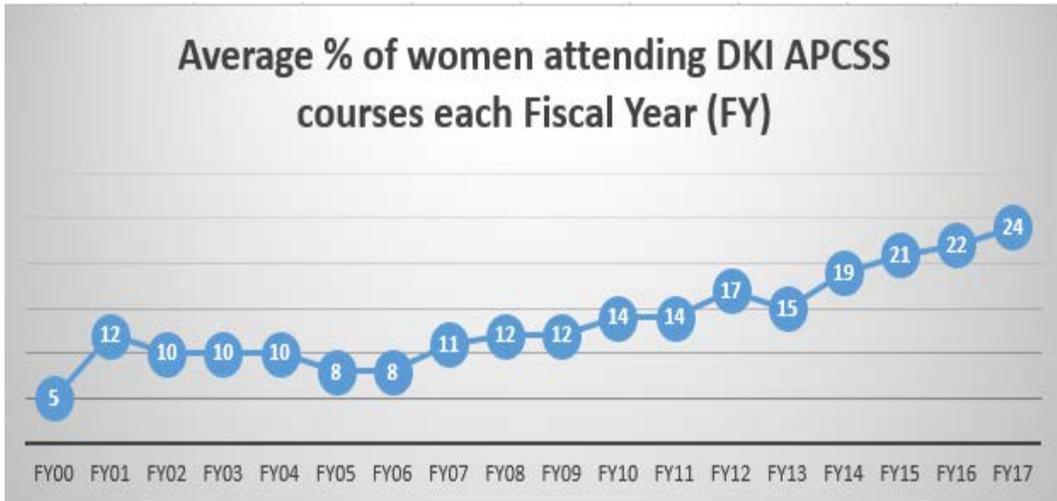
The Women, Peace and Security program is an important feature of the DKI APCSS broader mission to build the security capacities of practitioners and leaders in the Indo-Asia Pacific region. The program was established soon after the unveiling of the US NAP on Women, Peace and Security (2011), supporting and drawing guidance from it. It has since remained one of the institution's top priorities. The executive education approach to WPS continues to evolve and progress as leadership and faculty determine how best to operationalize it. DKI APCSS applies innovative methodologies to incorporate WPS within existing practices. These efforts entail a four-pillared approach illustrated below. Of these, the paper will focus on the strategy to enable a gender perspective by: i) integrating more female participants in its in-resident programs and ii) incorporating a layered approach to WPS.

## 4 Pillars of WPS at DKI APCSS



### 1. **Increasing the percentage of female course participants to enable a gender perspective**

DKI APCSS has actively pursued the integration of women and their perspectives in its executive education program since 2012. Sustained recruitment efforts in the region show a steady increase of females in the in-resident program to about 25% of the course population, refer to the DKI APCSS chart below.



The 25% goal is often met and is sometimes exceeded in a number of courses. For example, in two executive courses titled Advanced Security Cooperation (ASC) and Comprehensive Crisis Management (CCM), recruitment levels have ranged between 29-37% during the past two years. The increased enrollment of women in various courses, however, does not reflect overall trends in gender integration in regional security sector services. The strategy deliberately seeks to build a critical mass of women in the classroom to meaningfully integrate the gender perspective in security discourses. Incremental female participation has enriched critical thinking and problem-solving through more inclusive discussions on a range of security issues. Core lectures and elective offerings on WPS highlight the linkages between gender and security, creating increased awareness, inspiring leadership, and promoting regional communities of interest and practice.

Although there have been significant improvements in efforts to increase female participation in the “Comprehensive Security Responses to Terrorism” course over the past several years, it is still falling short of the 25% goal. Much lower female participation in the military, law enforcement and justice sectors, compared to other security agencies in the region, partly explains this shortfall. Nonetheless, many countries are increasingly recognizing the importance of women’s perspectives and capacities in these sectors, and are adopting whole-of-society approaches.

Mentorship sessions at the outset of courses encourage female course participants to actively participate in plenary and seminars, student-led discussion groups. This is

important as women from the region have fewer opportunities to participate in international forums and sometimes hesitate to speak up. Building their capacity to communicate with confidence is fundamental for integrating their perspective. Adding more women in courses is a critical step but not sufficient in and of itself. Cultivating and enhancing women's leadership capacities is of paramount importance. Women's visibility in leadership roles is also believed to generate a role model effect at the national level (Duflo et al, 2012). The gender gap in leadership positions in the region, however, results in much lower female participation in senior courses, evidence that practical gains in gender diversity at the top-decision making levels require commitment and sustained efforts at the national level.

The messaging and optics associated with DKI APCSS recruitment efforts are creating a slow and steady ripple effect in integrating women's perspectives in regional security policies and practices. The critical and transparent exchange of perspectives with an increased number of capable female practitioners helps male course participants overcome their biases and to understand the need for gender inclusion. Many male course attendees go on to act as advocates and create opportunities to advance the careers of women. A number of male alumni in the region are actively increasing female recruitment and are placing them into a broader variety of positions in national, regional and international organizations. Additionally, DKI APCSS alumni have developed numerous projects advancing WPS objectives in the region. Female course participants report that they aren't considered for professional development opportunities and participation at international forums without targeted recruitment measures. A global impetus on building an increasingly capable and confident pool of female practitioners in security sector institutions is of the essence. In furthering this objective, DKI APCSS could consider reviewing its strategy to pursue an incremental 33% female recruitment goal, a third of its in-resident course demographic.

## **2. Integrating WPS in the curriculum using a layered approach**

DKI APCSS courses and WPS-themed workshops routinely feature discussions on gender inclusion, leadership roles, and policies to train, recruit, and retain women in

security sector institutions. The value of offering WPS in course curricula, however, is sometimes questioned by participants who are unfamiliar with the relevance of gender in the context of national security. Socio-cultural norms and organizational stereotypes often contribute to this resistance. The idea that women are equal stakeholders in security and should inform how it is defined frequently generates cognitive dissonance, a feeling of mental discomfort, among course attendees. Security is traditionally viewed as a masculine domain. The notion that it is a shared responsibility and women can make effective change agents can sometimes have a polarizing effect. Women's childbearing and care-giving roles, sexual vulnerabilities, and physical differences are often cited as arguments against gender inclusive institutional structures.

On another level, an important lesson in teaching WPS to executives has been that the terminology "Women, Peace and Security" is frequently misunderstood.<sup>2</sup> A majority of course participants are unfamiliar with the UNSCR 1325 framework and challenge the notion that gender is an important element of national security. Some assume it undermines men and their masculinities and could potentially displace them from their jobs. Talking about WPS in plenary sessions is also sometimes perceived as misplaced advocacy on behalf of the UN and the U.S. government. References to women and gender issues are sometimes perceived as women's rights-centered perspectives and a threat to cultural norms and values.

Be that as it may, during the past six years, DKI APCSS has actively introduced and raised a greater awareness of WPS among thousands of international and U.S. security practitioners. The program continues to provide a collaborative academic environment for international military and civilian officials to critically contemplate gender experiences and concerns as important pieces of the security puzzle. Courses include plenary and classroom discussions dedicated to exploring the gendered dimensions of security and their impact on state fragility and instability. Topics such as humanitarian assistance, governance,

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<sup>2</sup> A similar conclusion is drawn in, *A Guide to Talking Women, Peace, and Security Inside the U.S. Security Establishment*. New America Foundation, Feb 21, 2017. Available online at: <https://www.newamerica.org/better-life-lab/policy-papers/guide-talking-women-peace-and-security-inside-us-security-establishment/#what-you-will-find-in-this-guide>

displacement crises, human trafficking, justice and law, violent extremism, socio-economic development, among others, provide data points for deconstructing security through a gender lens

Knowledge production on the role and impact of women in security sector institutions is fundamental for advancing UNSCR 1325 and National Action Plans on WPS. The lack of systematic data on the number of women in security sector institutions in the Indo-Asia Pacific makes it difficult to communicate the value of gender inclusion. In an effort to compile data on the status of women's inclusion in the region, DKI APCSS recently embarked on a research project involving over ten countries in the region.<sup>3</sup> The effort led to the finding that the information is generally not documented or unavailable. The absence of data makes it difficult to argue the case for gender integration as an important national security strategy. It also makes it difficult to track country and regional progress on inclusion. Planning for gender-responsive programming to support professional development, expansion of professional roles, and creating opportunities for advancement to leadership also require gender-related data.

These challenges to teaching and communicating WPS topics have engendered an effort to refine the teaching methodology. One refinement has been to better understand the audience, and evaluating what their requirements for this topic actually are. This is often an arduous task as up to forty or more countries are represented in various courses, each with a unique context. In courses where the student demographic is relatively more homogenous however, it is easier to adjust instructional design on the basis of nationality and professional background. For instance, in the Asia-Pacific Orientation Course (APOC) course, the population of which is comprised of approximately 85% mid-career U.S. military and government executives who work in the region, or who otherwise specialize in regional issues for their home organization. This population can also be further stratified into those who advocate for or agree with WPS messaging, those who disregard the topic because they don't see it as a problem in their lives or in the U.S., and those who are at best

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<sup>3</sup> The research was conducted in preparation for the workshop titled "Addressing Institutional Barriers to Inclusion in the Security Sector" in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, August 2016.

agnostic on gender issues. That said, most, if not all, of these practitioners have been exposed to other WPS trainings, and feedback frequently received from them questions why they are receiving more WPS content. Some feedback also asks why WPS is included in a regionally-focused course with greater security priorities.

These are useful comments, and to address them, strategies to incorporate WPS into APOC are being revisited, for example by piloting a lecture that is more grounded in the regional context. The content links societal inequalities and violence directly to state fragility and instability. To security practitioners, these linkages are more relevant and thematically consistent with other lectures; presenting a plenary WPS discussion in a way they can use in their duties—whether that be developing engagement strategy for the region, advising their leadership on regional topics, or in other ways. In short, it addresses the common interests of many of these U.S.-based security practitioners, which is receiving more knowledge and tools for enabling regional security, without shining a light on gender issues in the U.S. and causing elements of the audience to be defensive. Highlighting the problems in the region, subtly draws attention to the need for more gender diversity on the U.S. side, especially when it engages in the region to more effectively achieve a desired outcome.

Contrast the new approach in APOC with some of the other courses, where the student demographics are reversed: 85% are from the Indo-Asia Pacific and other regions, many of which experience the societal inequalities and violence which form the core of our APOC lecture. At least some of them will be resistant to the overall themes of any lecture focused on WPS. To this audience, course managers and faculty employ a more nuanced multi-layered approach.

First, a WPS lecture is currently not labeled as such; it is part of an overall lecture on inclusion in the region, focusing on vulnerable and marginalized populations. This lecture also includes a mixed-gender panel to convey the information to a primarily regional-audience for whom some of the issues may generate mental discomfort. Specifically, a mixed-gender panel avoids questions about why a male instead of a female

is giving a lecture focused on a topic that could be viewed by some as woman-focused. It also avoids the perception of a women's rights agenda, if only a female presents.

Second, course managers are experimenting with embedding WPS themes in a number of plenary lectures in courses attended primarily by regional practitioners, and making it relevant to each topic. By not drawing attention to WPS specifically, this method is intended to impart the message that WPS is a cross-cutting theme and doesn't need to be addressed separately.

Third, an entire seminar period is dedicated to the WPS-specific inclusion lecture. Seminars are smaller groups of twelve to fourteen students who meet after most lectures to conduct more in-depth discussions of the topics just presented in plenary. Each seminar is very diverse, with a mostly even distribution of nationality, specialization, and gender across all of the seminars. The courses with primarily international attendees tend to be longer in duration, and after several weeks of meeting several times a day, the dynamic in seminar discussions leads to greater transparency, sharing of personal views, respectful disagreement and dialogue. The candid exchange of views and experiences in this venue helps to advance a clearer understanding of WPS themes and how they fit into the bigger picture.

Last, DKI APCSS courses generally include at least one elective focused on a WPS-related topic, and in some cases more than one. Electives are offered three to four times during each course, and are selected by students due to their interest in that topic. Sometimes this interest is generated in a plenary or seminar discussion. These electives offer more opportunities to expand participant understanding of WPS themes and challenges in the region.

Informal interactive dialogue among course participants, from regions as far away as Asia, Africa, the Americas, Middle East and Oceania, forms the premise for critical thinking and transformative learning. While perspective transformation generally happens over a period of time, paradigm shifts are frequently observed at DKI APCSS. Learning-centered dialogic practices are actively pursued to this end and are particularly effective in generating reflective and constructive dialogue among security practitioners. The

experiences of states and societies with similar security challenges are shared and assessed in a safe space. Story-telling in academic discourses is a powerful tool in collaborative meaning making (Chai, 2013; Gravett 2014), a process whereby ideas are shared, interpreted and negotiated, and problems are jointly assessed -- often leading to a shared understanding of security. A free-flowing and transparent exchange of diverse perspectives in a friendly classroom environment lends greater legitimacy to alternative viewpoints triggering the process of unlearning required for receptivity to new ways of thinking. The learning process is facilitated by Socratic inquiry in the classroom over a period of four to five weeks in most courses, stimulating productive discomfort. Research suggests that cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) is usually key to influencing mind-sets, attitudes and behaviors to enable paradigm shifts. Course surveys and individual narratives suggest that the transformative learning experience provided by DKI APCSS is one of its core competencies.

### **Recommendations to bolster regional National Action Plans on WPS**

Using the gender lens to build the capacities of security practitioners, DKI APCSS often emphasizes the objectives of the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSC, 2000) as they provide an international framework for policy planning at the national level. UNSCR 1325 is legally binding on all UN member states and represents an international political consensus on four key areas: *(i)* participation of women in security policy, conflict prevention, management and resolution at national, regional and international levels; *(ii)* protection of women from all forms of structural and direct violence in conflict and post-conflict contexts, including sexual and gender-based violence; *(iii)* prevention of the impact of armed conflict on women and the violation of their rights including through implementation of international humanitarian and human rights law; *(iv)* peacebuilding and efforts related to relief and recovery including those involving refugees and displaced communities.

In its own efforts to advance these objectives, the UN suggests that women on the ground are an operational necessity (UN Peacekeeping, 2017). For instance, female

peacekeepers are critical for gaining access to and effectively engaging with communities. When mobilized in search and disarmament missions, their presence reduces the likelihood of conflict. They are better able to assist in the rehabilitation of women ex-combatants, provide medical, legal, and counseling services to communities, especially women and girls, and to serve as role models. Yet women peacekeepers merely represent 3% of military and 10% of police personnel in UN missions (ibid).

Women's participation is also integral to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations where community needs are often defined by gender. Women face a greater risk of sexual violence in disaster zones and are less likely to report it to male officials. They require reproductive healthcare assistance, needs they are uncomfortable discussing with men. With the predominance of male security personnel, however, women's needs in conflict and crisis affected zones remain poorly addressed. Similarly, a critical mass of women, loosely defined as 20-30 percent institutional representation (Nossel, 2016), in the law and justice sectors is imperative for bringing about change in societies where violence against women is pervasive. Afghanistan is a case in point (Al Jazeera, 2015).

While the UN's WPS agenda has generated an increased awareness of the relevance of a gender perspective in security policy discourses, progress has been slow. Of the seventy-three countries with NAPs on WPS, only about seventeen have allocated a budget for implementation as of early 2018 (Peace Women, n.d.). Regional security practitioners, male and female, often emphasize the lack of political will, funding and inadequate strategies to overcome barriers to policy implementation. It would be worthwhile to share recommendations to bolster these efforts from the findings of the DKI APCSS workshop titled "Addressing Institutional Barriers to Inclusion in the Security Sector" with representation from twelve regional locations in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, August 2016.<sup>1</sup> They highlight: i) the importance of National Action Plans; ii) building societal and institutional awareness, iii) building women's capacities, iv) gender-friendly institutional structures; and v) regional collaboration. Detailed recommendations are provided below.

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<sup>1</sup> Countries represented at the workshop are not identified in keeping with the organizational principle of non-attribution.

**1. National level recommendations**

**i) Draft and enact National Action Plans**

- Identify impediments to implementation

**ii) Build greater awareness of WPS objectives**

- Launch a public awareness campaign through research, public engagements and social networks.
- Work with media to showcase women's voices and leadership in the security sector.
- Work with educational institutions through curriculum changes and socialization of school going children to discourage gender-based stereotyping.
- Address data gaps on inclusion of women in security sector as input to policy formulation and implementation.
- Train gender advocates through workshops, meetings and letters.
- Hold gender sensitive trainings for policy makers and executives to influence political will.
- Create male leader's awareness to influence mindsets; identify and train gender champions.
- Tap women's organizations to advance public-private partnerships through advocacy.
- Create or expand network organizations in the security sector for women.
- Lobby parliamentarians to drive political will.

**ii) Build greater capacity of women in security sector institutions**

- Adopt and develop institutional policy that identifies areas where women's strengths can be specialized and developed.
- Target training for women in security agencies.
- Increase the number of Defense and Police Academies for women.
- Provide leadership trainings, mentorship programs and support networks for women.
- Establish clear career paths for women.
- Promote more women to senior positions.

**iii) Create an enabling environment for women at the institutional level**

- Earmark 5% of agency budgets for gender related activities.
- Develop clear organizational vision.
- Amend existing regulations such as rank promotion rules, organizational rules and procedures, and develop necessary regulations to mainstream gender; introduce special programs to support women's retention.
- Introduce, impose and increase quotas for women's entry and advancement.
- Provide incentives for women's recruitment in institutions such as the military and police.
- Create a conducive work environment by improving gender-sensitive facilities.
- Engage human resources departments in creating leadership awareness regarding gender-responsive policy.
- Update personnel administrative manuals to support women's inclusion.
- Create online mechanisms for registering gender concerns in predominantly male institutions.

**2. Regional level recommendations**

- Develop and enact WPS through regional cooperation; jointly assess and explore ideas for implementation of policy.
- Arrange regional seminars and workshops providing opportunities for gender awareness and sensitization for both men and women.
- Establish regional norms and benchmarks for inclusion in the security sector.
- Assess progress on regional benchmarks through collaborative monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
- Establish a regional Security Sector Network (including both men and women).
- Share information and best practices on the Internet.
- Promote bilateral and multi-lateral cooperation on gender between governments.
- Support professional exchanges within the region.
- Address data gaps through networked research.

## Conclusion

DKI APCSS continues to evolve and refine its approach to integrate WPS in its security studies curricula. Many important lessons have been learned on this journey in executive education. While this paper focuses primarily on the organization's recruitment efforts, transformative learning processes and tools enabling gender inclusion in the region, it is important to acknowledge the role of leadership in institutionalizing WPS. Lt Gen (Ret) Daniel P. Leaf pioneered the program and made it his top institutional priority during his term as Director. It has since been supported with great enthusiasm by his successors, Directors Major General James S. Hartsell and now Rear Admiral (Ret) Peter A. Gumataotao. It is important to acknowledge that leadership commitment and male championship are indispensable to advancing WPS objectives. Cultural change is central to the WPS agenda making many DKI APCSS course attendees and sometimes the faculty uncomfortable with this concept. Educating regional and U.S. security practitioners about gender-driven threats prepares them to effectively plan and respond to the evolving context of security, protecting communities and advancing state stability. A primary challenge in imparting knowledge on WPS remains the gender data gap in the security sector in the region. Research in this area is highly recommended as key players work to advance the objectives of UNSCR 1325, the U.S. National Action Plan, and a more inclusive region.

*The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any agency of the Government of the United States of America.*

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