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Building Brazil's National Action Plan: lessons learned and opportunities

Renata Avelar Giannini and Pérola Abreu Pereira

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Brazil's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP) was launched on 8 March 2017 – International Women's Day – in the midst of a major political crisis that affected the content of the Plan and engagement of key institutions such as the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the Secretariat for Women's Policies (SPM, from Portuguese). Still, active engagement by the military and foreign service and compromises between stakeholders enabled the development of the Plan. While a strong emphasis on Brazil's international undertakings was upheld, the domestic challenges confronted by Brazilian women living in extremely unsafe areas of the country were left out, as were other central issues, including trafficking of women, the impact of armed violence and organised crime. Towards the end of the process, civil society participation and the inclusion of a monitoring and evaluation system were undermined by the rise of a conservative tone within ministries participating in the ministerial working group tasked with the responsibility of drafting the NAP.

This paper examines the process that led to the drafting and launch of Brazil's NAP and how this process ultimately influenced the Plan's content, shaping future outcomes. We argue that there were domestic and international conditions that enabled Brazil's National Action Plan to be drafted. Internationally, the normative advances of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda at the United Nations, and particularly in peacekeeping operations, were key to exercising pressure on Brazil's efforts to implement the agenda. In the domestic realm, (1) the initial engagement of key civil society organisations with the WPS agenda; (2) increasing advances towards gender equality in the defence, security and foreign service sectors; and (3) the personal leadership of mid-level professionals in key ministries increased the government's willingness to pursue a NAP.

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Brazil's strong identification as a pivotal actor when it comes to international peace and security and its commitment to international peacekeeping efforts are the key factors behind the launch of the Plan, and go some way towards explaining why it is an outward-looking plan, focused on its foreign and defence policies.

An outward-looking plan eliminated resistance to the NAP within more conservative sectors, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The leadership of that Ministry also enabled the advancement of the Plan, despite the political, economic and social turbulence affecting the country. At the same time, the complex domestic scenario made it virtually impossible to achieve consensus on certain issues and, as a result, three fundamental issues were purposely left out of the plan: (1) civil society participation in the validation and implementation of the NAP; (2) a robust system of monitoring and evaluation; and (3) strong content on arguably controversial issues, including women's participation in the armed forces; harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse within military, police and foreign service institutions; trafficking of women; women's burden in violent urban contexts; and the impact of armed violence (including small arms and ammunition) on women.

It is important to note, however, that innovative content and processes were included throughout the NAP drafting process, namely: active participation of civil society in the drafting of the NAP text; a gendered approach to Brazil's strategy to receive refugees; and the creation of an inter-ministerial working group. As a conservative tone gained traction in Brazilian politics – a major outcome from the 2018 presidential elections – the NAP's duration was renewed for yet

another four years in March 2019, despite the difficult context.

The paper is structured in four parts. The first part discusses the key factors that enabled Brazil to develop its own NAP. The second part describes its content. The third and fourth parts discuss the process through which Brazil's NAP was built and how this process influenced the content as well as the main challenges. The concluding section offers some insights on the way forward in light of the renewal of the NAP in a time where a conservative government took office.

THE ORIGINS OF BRAZIL'S NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

Since the launch of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), Brazil has taken meaningful steps towards protecting women through peacekeeping, such as the inclusion of gender issues in the pre-deployment training course by the Brazilian Peacekeeping Training Centre (CCOPAB, from Portuguese), and the development of cooperation projects to address sexual violence in conflict-affected countries such as Haiti, Guinea-Bissau and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Also, in 2012 the Brazilian Pluriannual Plan (PNPM), an important planning document from the executive, determined that civilian and military women's participation in UN peace operations should be improved. However, those measures were not necessarily motivated by a coordinated or planned effort to implement the WPS agenda.

Only more recently has Brazil taken concrete steps to implement the agenda, of which the launching of the NAP on 8 March 2017 is the utmost example. Previously, discussions about the WPS agenda were virtually absent from all government circles, even though the country endorsed Resolution 1960 (2010).¹ Brazil's strong identification as a pivotal actor when it comes

- 1 At the time, Brazil was a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, which explains its endorsement of the resolution.
- 2 Kai Michael Kenkel, "South America's Emerging Power: Brazil as Peacekeeper", *International Peacekeeping*, 17 (5) (2010): 644–661; Eduarda Passarelli Hamann, "Brazil and R2P: A Rising Global Player Struggles to Harmonise Discourse and Practice" in *The Responsibility to Protect – From Evasive to Reluctant Action? The Role of Global Middle Powers*, ed. Hans Seidel Foundation, Institute for Strategic Studies, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and South African Institute of International Affairs (Johannesburg, 2012), http://us-cdn.creamermedia.co.za/assets/articles/attachments/42371_iss_fromevasivereluctantaction.pdf#page=85.
- 3 Seun Abiola, Cedric de Coning, Eduarda Hamann and Chander Prakash, "The Large Contributors and UN Peacekeeping Doctrine" in *UN Peacekeeping Doctrine in a New Era Adapting to Stabilisation, Protection and New Threats*, ed. Cedric de Coning, Chiyuki Aoi and John Karlsrud, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017): 152–185.
- 4 Renata Avelar Giannini and Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa, "Brazil's Incorporating a Gender Perspective in MINUSTAH" in *Brazil's Participation in MINUSTAH (2004-2017): Perceptions, Lessons and Practices for Future Missions*, ed. Eduarda Hamann and Carlos Augusto Ramires Teixeira. <https://igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Brazils-Participation-in-MINUSTAH-2004-2017.pdf>.

to international peace and security and its commitment to international peacekeeping efforts² are the key factors behind the launch of the Plan, and go some way towards explaining why it is an outward-looking plan, focused on its foreign and defence policies.

We attribute the advancement of Brazil's NAP to a combination of international and national factors. The strengthening of the normative framework surrounding the WPS agenda at the UN was central to pushing Brazil to implement it. In the domestic arena, enabling conditions can be traced to 2012, when a presidential decree urged the Armed Forces to authorise women to join certain military schools, spurring debate in the government, academia and certain civil society organisations around the role of women in unstable settings.

International Factors

Brazil's diplomatic discourse has a longstanding tradition of reinforcing its role in the international peace and security architecture³. As a result, with the development of a strong normative framework in regard to the WPS agenda – resolutions, training modules, guidelines, structures and processes – pressure towards its implementation also increased. If Brazil was to demonstrate its commitment to the UN system and values through international peacekeeping, it would also have to respond to the increasing demands to implement the WPS agenda.

In this context, Brazil's military leadership of the UN Stabilisation Mission in Haiti was key to advancing the debate within the defence sector.⁴ CCOPAB is among the first actors to discuss the agenda within Brazil and although its scope was limited to conflict-related sexual violence and sexual exploitation and abuse, it was an important space for reflection and debate.⁵ This is particularly the case

as the military sector has traditionally been the most challenging actor when it comes to implementing this agenda.⁶

The obligation to increase the participation of women in peacekeeping was also a major incentive to foster debate on Resolution 1325. Brazil had an obligation to respond to the low percentage of female representation in its peacekeeping contingents (around one per cent at the time),⁷ a major reflection of women's limited participation in the military at home.

Another key instance where discussions around the WPS agenda thrived was within diplomacy, particularly the Brazilian Mission to the UN. As Brazil was a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2010-2011, it actively participated in the debates about UNSCR 1325. The country not only sponsored Resolution 1960, it also donated one million dollars to the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights to support survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).⁸ Around the same time, a number of technical cooperation projects addressing gender-based violence began, particularly in Haiti and Guinea-Bissau.⁹

From that time on, particularly after the 15th anniversary of Resolution 1325 in 2015, Brazil's engagement with the agenda was solid and continued. It publicly announced the drafting process of the NAP in 2015.¹⁰ It is also important to highlight that between 2016 and 2017 Brazil presided over the UN Commission on the Status of Women, pushing for a leading role in the gender equality agenda.

Domestic factors

Important advances when it comes to gender equality and women's protection were advanced in Brazil during the 12 years when a left-wing, progressive

5 Marcela Donadio, *Resolución del Consejo de Seguridad y Planes Nacionales de Acción en América Latina*, (Rio de Janeiro: Igarapé Institute, 2016).

6 Carol Cohn, "Mainstreaming Gender in UN Security Policy: A Path to Political Transformation?" in *Global Governance: Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Shirin M. Rai and Georgina Waylen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 185–206.; Renata Giannini, Mariana Lima and Pérola Pereira, "Brazil and UN Security Council Resolution 1325: Progress and Challenges of the Implementation Process", *PRISM* 6 (1) (2016): 179–197; Robert Egnell, "Gender Perspectives and Military Effectiveness: Implementing UNSCR 1325 and the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security", *PRISM* 6 (1) (2016): 73–89; Donna Bridges and Debbie Horsfall, "Increasing Operational Effectiveness in UN Peacekeeping: Toward a Gender-Balanced Force", *Armed Forces and Society* 36 (1) (2009): 120–130.

7 MINUSTAH's gender statistics for 2004-2016 can be download from: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/gender>.

8 Renata Avelar Giannini, "Promover Gênero e Construir a Paz: a Experiência Brasileira", Igarapé Institute Strategic Article (Set/2014), https://igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/AE-09_PROMOVER-GENERO-E-CONSOLIDAR-A-PAZ.pdf.

9 Ibid.

10 United Nations, "Statement by the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations at the Security Council", UN Doc. S/PV.7533, 13 October 2015, 66.

government held office. The governments of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2002–2009) and Dilma Rousseff (2010–2016) created and strengthened a set of governmental bodies and agencies dedicated to the promotion of women's rights. To illustrate, the SPM – a specialised body to address women's issues with ministerial status – was created in 2003, and strong legislation on violence against women was approved in 2006.

However, it is important to highlight that the WPS agenda never gained traction domestically during this period. We propose that there are two main reasons for that: (1) there was a general lack of knowledge about the WPS agenda, not only in the government, but also within civil society groups that could otherwise have pushed the government towards implementation; and (2) the WPS agenda has traditionally focused on conflict-related contexts and Brazil, despite being the country with the highest murder rate in the world¹¹ and a home to violent organised criminal groups, it is not officially at war.

Debates surrounding the presence of women in the military had been intense since the 2012 decree. The Navy authorised women to enter its Naval School in the logistics branch, and the Army was already preparing to receive the first cadets in 2017.¹² The changes led the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to create a Gender Commission in 2014 to address issues related to women's presence in the Armed Forces and their participation in peacekeeping operations. These processes were an opportunity to deepen debate and reflection about the role and participation of women in the Brazilian military, particularly in combat roles, a taboo subject until then.

At the same time, an informal group of female diplomats compiled evidence of more than 100 cases of sexual harassment and abuse within their

institution.¹³ In September 2014, the MFA created a commission to discuss race and gender inclusion.¹⁴ The institution also became an active participant in debates about Resolution 1325 both abroad and at home and engaged with the few civil society organisations dedicated to the WPS agenda. However, in order to advance with the NAP, the MFA needed a green light from other institutions as well.

Despite the widening of the debate, some of the key pillars of WPS, particularly increased participation of women in international peace and security, and hence in the national military forces, encountered resistance. The elaboration of a NAP was interpreted by many as a way to impose feminism – an often misunderstood term within these circles – on the military.¹⁵

In this context, three groups of actors performed an important role in putting in motion the process of elaborating a NAP. First, civil society, who were absent until then. The Igarapé Institute, a “think and do” tank based in Rio de Janeiro with research focused on the field of WPS, convened a seminal seminar in Brasilia in March 2014 with multiple government representatives to discuss the challenges the agenda faced in Brazil.¹⁶ The event enabled an honest conversation between different government sectors, including diplomatic service personnel, as well as representatives of the military, police, civil society and academia, about key challenges to advancing the WPS agenda, including the elaboration of a NAP. The seminar, which received the support from the MFA and the MoD, was a first step toward a continued conversation around the theme.

Although the participation of civil society during the drafting process was limited to one organisation, that participant had full access to all meetings and was responsible for drafting the first draft version of each section. As a result,

11 Robert Muggah, and Katherine Aguirre, “Citizen Security in Latin America: Facts and Figures”, *Igarapé Institute Strategic Paper 33*, (2018): 1–57, <https://igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Citizen-Security-in-Latin-America-Facts-and-Figures.pdf>.

12 Presidência da República, “Lei N. 12.705, de 8 de agosto de 2012”, accessed August 27 2019, http://www.planalto.gov.br/CCIVIL_03/Ato2011-2014/2012/Lei/L12705.htm.

13 Catarina Alencastro, “Diplomatas Relatam Casos de Assédio Dentro do Itamaraty”, *O Globo*, 1 December 2015, <https://oglobo.globo.com/brasil/diplomatas-relatam-casos-de-assedio-dentro-do-itamaraty-18186656>.

14 Ministério das Relações Exteriores, “Março. Mês da Mulher”, Ministério das Relações Exteriores, accessed August 27 2019, <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/pt-BR/component/content/article?id=13387>.

15 As members of the interagency working group tasked with the responsibility of drafting the NAP, the authors participated in formal and informal meetings where some of these claims were made by more conservative members of the group.

16 The programme for the event can be viewed at <https://www.resdal.org/assets/evento-igarape-mar2013-reporte.pdf>.

although government representatives would later soften the language or delete important content, civil society had the opportunity to influence the content and the language of the text. The Igarapé Institute also informally consulted with other organisations on specific content.

Secondly, it is important to highlight the major role played by mid-level professionals from the MFA and the MoD who had a personal interest in and background knowledge of the WPS agenda. Not only did they advance the technical details of a possible Brazilian NAP, they also discussed WPS with higher-level representatives and gathered the necessary political support for the elaboration of a Brazilian NAP. In the absence of a formal structure and process to discuss Brazil's involvement with the WPS agenda, the personal leadership and interest of these professionals was key to framing the importance of Brazil launching a NAP in recognition of its role as an international peace and security guarantor.

In fact, a major lesson learned from this process was that the framing strategy carried out by these mid-level professionals was a necessary condition for the approval from all sectors to elaborate Brazil's NAP. The general interpretation that prevailed was that the plan would only formalise measures that were already underway. There was little expectation that the NAP would have strong content on the more delicate issues, such as sexual harassment, women in the military, trafficking of women, armed violence in urban contexts, monitoring and evaluation plans and civil society participation.

Another key institution that stimulated this change in fortunes for WPS in Brazil was the Pandiá Calógeras Institute, an independent research body within the MoD. Its representatives also engaged mid-level professionals who, besides carrying out research, participated in the MoD's Gender Commission in order

to influence the agenda. Pandiá made WPS one of its priorities.¹⁷ Its role in disseminating research and coordinating multi-stakeholder conversation enabled some key advances when it came to widening debates around the possibility of elaborating a NAP.¹⁸ It became clear that Brazil experienced key advances in the area, but lacked a tool to properly keep track of them.

Third, having the MFA lead the process through its Peace and Security Division, at the time headed by the first woman since its creation, was fundamental. She embraced the agenda and paid close attention to the process, with strong and careful leadership, even as the country was hit by a major political crisis. The MFA is recognised by domestic actors, public and private, as an institution that elaborates state policies, whereby the national interest prevails over the private interest of political parties, ideologies or powerful groups. This aspect, on the one hand, eliminated resistance and favoured overall continuity of the process. On the other hand, it resulted in a NAP focused on the international context and the country's external performance.

THE DRAFTING PROCESS

Drafting took place between November 2015 and March 2017 and can be divided into three phases. The first phase (November 2015 – March 2016) was dedicated to establishing the working group's knowledge on the WPS resolutions and key pillars of the agenda, as well as developing an understanding of Brazil's implementation efforts thus far. The second phase (March 2016 – November 2016) involved the drafting process, within a very volatile political environment. The third and final phase (November 2016 – March 2017) was marked by political negotiations among government actors to reach a consensus on the sensitive themes.

17 Mariana Lima, "O Brasil Precisa Adotar um Plano Nacional de Ação para Implementação da Resolução 1325 do CSNU?", Pandiá Calógeras Institute internal working paper (2015).

18 Pandiá Calógeras Institute, "O Brasil e a Resolução 1325 do Conselho de Segurança das Nações Unidas", Pandiá Calógeras Institute <https://pandia.defesa.gov.br/pt/agenda-pandia/279-o-brasil-e-a-resolu%C3%A7%C3%A3o-1325-do-conselho-de-seguran%C3%A7a-das-na%C3%A7%C3%B5es-unidas>.

There are two main outcomes to be highlighted in the process. First, the creation of an official group within the MoD to evaluate the content of the plan, which contributed to fostering debates about the theme in a traditionally conservative sector. The second was the launch of the NAP despite the change in the government leadership, suggesting that Brazil's engagement with the agenda goes beyond the interest of governing parties. However, a major challenge was the political turbulence that affected not only institutional membership of the group, but also changes in representatives and consequent disengagement with certain themes.

Officially, the drafting process started in November 2015, when the MFA invited the MoD, Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the SPM to join the interagency working group. The group would later be named after Bertha Lutz, in honour of the memory of the only female Brazilian delegate to the Conference of San Francisco, in 1945, where she successfully pushed for the inclusion of gender equality in the United Nations Charter.¹⁹ UN Women Brazil and the Igarapé Institute were also invited to join the group.

At the beginning of the drafting process, a debate took place over what should be the focus of the Brazilian NAP. The NAPs from developed countries are mostly focused on foreign policy issues, while those of conflict-affected countries seek to strengthen gender equality in domestic affairs. Brazil is in an unusual position neither as a classic conflict or post-conflict country or a typical developed donor country. However, the country does experience pressing security challenges and war-like scenarios due to the presence of various organised groups.

At that point, under the leadership of the MFA, which formally coordinated the process, the decision was made that the Plan should be outward-looking. The

resistance of the Brazilian Chancellery to addressing internal matters such as public security instability as possible subjects for international debate or scrutiny was made clear. What is more, the beginning of the political crisis that ultimately led to the disengagement of the MoJ and SPM from the working group contributed to the absence of considerations regarding the domestic sphere in the Plan.

During the drafting process, the first step was to agree on the key pillars of Brazil's plan before specific meetings dedicated to each pillar were held on a monthly basis. Brazil's NAP follows the traditional pillars of the WPS agenda (participation, prevention, protection and humanitarian cooperation), and includes another dedicated to promoting engagement and raising awareness on the agenda. Igarapé Institute's representative would draft each section, and the text would be debated and agreed among members of the group.

High-level military buy-in is important when drafting a NAP: in its absence, fundamental issues would ultimately be left out. The NAP drafting process gave rise to increasing awareness on the WPS agenda within the military. The three armed forces had direct participation in the group and sent representatives (separate from those of the MoD) to almost all of the meetings. Almost half of all the members of the working group represented the defence sector. Prior to those meetings, an internal meeting among members of the defence sector would develop the Ministry's position. The process turned out to be positive as several high-level officers deepened awareness on related issues, even if it was to pose counterarguments to the more progressive targets dedicated to increasing women's presence in the military.

The country's major political crisis resulted in the impeachment of the then-President, Dilma Rousseff in August 2016,

19 Phoebe Braithwaite, "How Latin American Women Fought for Women's Rights in the UN Charter", *Inter Press Service*, 15 September 2016, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2016/09/how-latin-american-women-fought-for-womens-rights-in-the-un-charter/>.

which led to major changes throughout all ministries. Not only were leaderships substituted, but some ministries ceased to exist. In that context, there were significant setbacks regarding the human rights agenda in general, with little concern for gender representation in government.

These concrete changes in leadership, along with the conservative tone of the new government, affected the NAP. For example, the Minister of Justice changed five times throughout 2016, severely compromising the participation of its representatives. SPM lost its ministerial status and ceased to exist as a separate entity. It was first integrated to the recently created Ministry of Women, Racial Equality and Youth and later into the structure of the Ministry of Justice and Citizenship. When the Plan was launched, SPM was part of the Ministry of Human Rights. A direct consequence of these changes was the absence or very limited participation of representatives of these institutions, which severely affected the inclusion of themes related to domestic affairs, such as women in the police, or the impact of organised crime on women in Brazil, among others.

This absence becomes clear when a more careful analysis of the Plan is carried out. In spite of the previous positive note on the engagement of the National Committee on Refugees (CONARE, from Portuguese), the NAP devotes more attention to women's participation in diplomacy and the military than the police. Furthermore, the two main ministries involved, Foreign Affairs and Defence, changed Ministers three times each throughout the process. At each change of management there was a need to present the agenda and status of the drafting process for the new authorities and their offices and to update and level the knowledge of the new mid-level members of the working group. This was particularly challenging when it comes to new conservative



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members included in the working group, particularly from Defence. In the post-impeachment process, conservative sectors felt more comfortable to express their views without embarrassment. There was also an expectation that the process of elaboration would be suspended, and some actors sought to associate the plan with the previous government and with a leftist ideological agenda fomented by international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with shadowy interests, as a behind-the-scenes strategy to halt the process.

As a result, the third phase of the drafting process was marked by negotiations among public officials on the final content of the NAP. At that stage, representatives from UN Women and Igarapé were excluded and although the content of each of the pillars was ready, there was no consensus around a few themes, particularly civil society participation and monitoring and evaluation. In order to keep the NAP, all representatives agreed to a consensual Plan, which meant that some of the more sensitive issues for the military were left aside. The Plan had been originally conceived by some of the representatives as a four-year document, but its initial duration was decreased to two years (March 2017 – March 2018) by the MFA as a way of waiting for better conditions under which to produce a new one.



While it has not always been possible to reach consensus on the goals, especially with regard to taboo themes such as sexual harassment legislation and women in the military, the discussions were unprecedented and planted seeds that may have an impact in the future.

Thanks to MFA's leadership throughout the consensus-building phase, the perception that prevailed was that the plan was not associated with the Rousseff government, the agendas of neighbouring countries, or any ideological current or hidden interest. Rather, it was associated with the recommendations of the UN Security Council, with a consistent international agenda and with an irreversible domestic process in which women are gaining more and more space and autonomy and barriers based on gender criteria progressively fall.

It is also important to note that due to the political instability and discontinuity in the aftermath of the impeachment of former president Rousseff, the legal status of the plan ended up falling short, as it was not submitted to the National Congress or to the Presidency of the Republic. If it had been approved by the Congress, or by the Executive as a decree-law, the NAP would have a legal status and its content would have been mainstreamed to all other Brazilian laws, norms and executive strategic plans. At the end of the process, however, the support of the drafting bodies was made official only by letters of introduction from the four ministers involved, giving the Plan the status of merely a ministerial declaration.

To illustrate its shortcomings, within the MoD the plan was not officially included in the list of policy documents or in the official speeches of authorities. Measures that were already being taken

on WPS continued, however the Ministry avoided making their association with the NAP explicit. In contrast, in the MFA the NAP has been highlighted in diplomatic communications and official speeches, showing a mismatch between the two main institutions involved in the drafting process.

The NAP process also provided invaluable advances and instances of reflection and honest communication around its content. As mentioned, in the MoD the elaboration of the NAP initiated a new internal debate on gender in peacekeeping operations and on the WPS agenda. These topics, previously largely unknown, were discussed in depth by the Defence sub-group throughout the drafting process. While it has not always been possible to reach consensus on the goals, especially with regard to taboo themes such as sexual harassment legislation and women in the military, the discussions were unprecedented and planted seeds that may have an impact in the future.

A major absence during the drafting process was that of more entities representing civil society. Although the Igarapé Institute participated in the process from the beginning to the end, promoting the first meetings and executing the drafting of the first versions, it was the only NGO to participate effectively in the process. Going forward, it is of paramount importance to engage more organisations from civil society and from the Brazilian feminist movement that could push for a more transformative NAP and bring its content closer to the country's domestic reality.

THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

The Brazilian NAP²⁰ is structured around four thematic pillars: 1) participation, 2) prevention and protection,²¹ 3) peacebuilding and

20 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security* (Brasília: FUNAG, 2017), http://funag.gov.br/biblioteca/download/1220-PNA_ingles_final.pdf.

21 Although these pillars have traditionally been separated, it was decided to put them together in Brazil's NAP. They are deeply interrelated when it comes to the activities undertaken by the country aiming to protect women's and girls' human rights and prevent gender-based violence in the conflict contexts in which Brazil engages.

humanitarian cooperation, and 4) awareness-raising, commitment and improvement. Each pillar contains one or two expected outcomes and a series of actions dedicated to reach it. The participation pillar focuses on increasing and improving women's participation in peace and security processes, referring to both Brazilian women and the local women living in conflict and post-conflict situations where Brazil is engaged. The prevention and protection pillar describes actions aimed at protecting the human rights of all women and girls and preventing gender-based violence in the conflict situations where Brazil engages. This pillar also has strong content and an innovative approach when it comes to promoting a gendered approach to refugees and asylum seekers in Brazil. The peacebuilding and humanitarian cooperation pillar proposes actions that aim to strengthen a gender perspective in Brazil's engagement in conflict and post-conflict situations. The awareness-raising, commitment and improvement pillar refers to actions aimed at deepening Brazilian society's general knowledge about the WPS agenda, engaging relevant actors with the implementation efforts and improving articulation with the civil society.

The NAP sets out two strategic objectives – gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment – as fundamental to the achievement of inclusive peace and security processes, guaranteeing that all proposed activities of the NAP consider these two objectives. Furthermore, each activity has a primary responsible public body, and one or more co-responsible public bodies. The Plan also includes a background section on Brazil's engagement with the agenda and women's rights advances; one additional section on duration, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; a glossary; and ends with some data on Brazilian women's participation in international peace and security.



There are concerns that the ideological position of the current government may affect Brazil's engagement with the agenda and the previous accomplishment of having the NAP as a state rather than a government policy.

The NAP's section on duration, implementation, monitoring and evaluation defines the NAP's duration for a two year period, and determines that the four sponsor ministries will establish the monitoring mechanisms for the Plan's implementation and that annual reports containing the implementation efforts, challenges and opportunities will be published. Although these have not been published, annual evaluation meetings took place in 2017 and 2018. The MFA and the MoD Gender Commissions had contributed to advancing this process until the MoD Gender Commission's activities were officially suspended when the new Bolsonaro government took office in January 2019. In light of that, there are concerns that the ideological position of the current government may affect Brazil's engagement with the agenda and the previous accomplishment of having the NAP as a state rather than a government policy.

It is important to mention the lack of specific financing to support implementation or a monitoring and evaluation process. Neither the budget units of the sponsor ministries nor the federal budget bodies were involved in the drafting process, so the NAP was limited to activities that could be implemented with no need for extra funding.

Despite these challenges, and in an overall context of backlash and conservatism in domestic politics, Brazil managed to approve a four-year renewal of the NAP, again led by the MFA. All the



A perception that defence and security are not matters of public interest still persists in the country. As a result, there was clear resistance towards including more civil society participation.

reach consensus among government representatives, the NAP did not respond to some of the most pressing needs *vis-à-vis* the WPS agenda in the country. What is more, there are three fundamental issues that were purposely left out of the plan in order to achieve a consensus between defence and diplomatic sectors.

actors previously engaged in the process participated in the renewal negotiations that took place between November 2018 and March 2019. The renewal of the Plan was officially announced by the Brazilian Ministry of Defence at the 2019 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial Conference in March, at the UN Headquarters in New York.²² At the same conference, Brazilian Navy Lieutenant Commander Marcia Braga, winner of the United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award for her work as gender advisor in the Central African Republic, received the award from UN Secretary-General António Guterres.²³ In the midst of a conservative context at the macro level, the government promptly capitalised on this award: it was welcomed at the MoD's speech at the conference, and Braga was granted an important military medal by President Bolsonaro back in Brazil. This more positive context at the micro level also had an impact on the Plan's renewal, which passed in spite of the general conservative environment. With this new four-year period approved, the Plan's content and Brazil's official commitment to WPS are secured, even though some important omissions in the original text were not yet addressed.

These were: (1) civil society participation in the validation and implementation of the NAP; (2) a robust system of monitoring and evaluation, including key indicators to measure progress and an active working group to monitor implementation; and (3) strong content on key issues, including women's participation in the armed forces, harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse within military, police and foreign service institutions, trafficking of women, women's burden in violent urban contexts and the impact of armed violence (including small arms and ammunition) on women.

Civil society participation

The MFA performed a leadership role that guaranteed minimum civil society participation by including at least one civil society organisation in the working group and carrying out an online consultation. Considering Brazil's long history of military dictatorship, there is a natural distrust between certain sectors of government and civil society. The history of a violent and cruel military dictatorship on one side and the strong, often combative activism by civil society on the other increased the gap between these two groups. What is more, a perception that defence and security are not matters of public interest still persists in the country. As a result, there was clear resistance towards including more civil society participation.

THE NAP'S CHALLENGES: NOTABLE OMISSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR DOMESTIC POLICY

A major characteristic of Brazil's NAP is that it is an outward-looking plan, and thus basically a foreign policy tool. While that was important in order to

Only one organisation was allowed to participate: the Igarapé Institute, which has a proven track record working on these themes and was considered a

22 See Fernando Azevedo e Silva, "Conferência Ministerial Sobre Operações de Manutenção da Paz das Nações Unidas – Nova Iorque – Mar 2019", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/brazilian-statement-portuguese.pdf>

23 UN Secretary General, "Brazilian Woman Peacekeeper Wins the United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award", *United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2019-03-26/brazilian-woman-peacekeeper-wins-the-united-nations-military-gender-advocate-of-the-year-award>.

trusted interlocutor by all government institutions represented in the group. Although Igarapé's participation was significant, having managed to provide direct inputs into the NAP's text, more diverse representation would benefit the content of the plan and its legitimacy among civil society groups.

An informal process established by Igarapé enabled limited participation from civil society experts on specific themes, including on refugees, sexual violence and participation. Nonetheless, a wide consultation process was hampered by the challenges of convincing the defence sector that public oversight is necessary. As an alternative, the MFA created an online consultation for groups and individuals who wanted to send contributions, yet, the process lacked transparency and diversity. As the text was not made available it was hard to have groups engage with it. Furthermore, specific passages in the draft NAP text that clearly stated the need to include civil society in the monitoring process were excluded from the final text in order to achieve consensus with the defence sector.

UN Women also participated in some of the working group meetings. It was not involved, however, in the drafting of the plan and it could have been more active building more bridges between the working group and civil society organisations. For future iterations of the plan, it would be very positive if UN Women were more involved and enabled the construction of a network of civil society organisations interested in the WPS agenda.

Monitoring and evaluation system

Although the activities of each pillar are organised into a chart showing the related objectives, with pre-defined responsible and co-responsible bodies for each activity, the working group did not agree



The general perception among government representatives is that a monitoring and evaluation system would be a way to criticise and expose the government. Hence, not sharing information would be the way to avoid public scrutiny.

on measuring tools. So, although each activity provides the NAP with a tool for accountability, it lacks measurability.

For example, the commitment in the NAP to increase in the participation of military women in peacekeeping operations – which in Brazil fell under one per cent of the deployed personnel at the time the NAP was drafted – is insignificant. In the beginning of the process, the proposal was that the Armed Forces could commit to a goal such as “eliminating all barriers to women’s access to the military career”, since it was clear that Brazil sends few women to peacekeeping operations because there are few women in combatant positions and limitations to access the required training. The final text fell short, lacking not only specific targets, but also clear language: that specific activity is described in the plan as “trying to broaden women’s access to the possibilities of the military career”.

The general perception among government representatives is that a monitoring and evaluation system would be a way to criticise and expose the government. Hence, not sharing information would be the way to avoid public scrutiny. This perception undermined the construction of a robust system of indicators with clear targets to monitor implementation. In times of political crisis such as the one Brazil is currently experiencing, the possibility of monitoring the implementation efforts would have offered an opportunity for policy continuation.²⁴ Still, the MFA called two meetings to evaluate progress, and

²⁴ It is important to highlight that the political environment in Brazil is extremely volatile since the beginning of the new government. Although the NAP was indeed renewed, recent diplomatic speeches indicate a government position against the term “gender”, thus putting in jeopardy many of the advances within the women’s rights agenda.



Another important issue that should be included in the next NAP is human trafficking. Women comprise the majority of victims of this type of crime in Brazil, being sold as sexual slaves around the world. Increasing cooperation mechanisms with other countries to combat this violent crime would be one of the many urgent actions to be included in Brazil's next NAP.

although there was not much, there was some limited political will to continue conversations to advance this area in the future, as the renewal of the plan was accompanied by a call from the MFA to each of the bodies of the working group to launch voluntary additional indicators.

Strong content on key issues

There are a few issues that are known to be sensitive for some of the sectors involved in the Plan, particularly those strictly related to the participation of women in the Armed Forces. Despite recent advances, with the opening of the military academy to women, some of the issues directly related to women's presence in the military confronted major resistance. In fact, all text that made references to increasing women's participation was either cut or softened. What is more, activities that would be necessary if Brazil was to create an enabling environment for women's full participation in the military were also left out.

For example, one of the activities under the prevention and protection pillar proposes cooperation with local institutions in conflict-affected contexts to elaborate and implement specific legislation on gender-based violence, including sexual violence, and women's access to justice and specialised services. It is interesting to note that the same Plan has a much less ambitious goal when it comes to

domestic legislation to deal with cases of sexual abuse committed by Brazilian uniformed officers.

Brazil supports the UN zero tolerance approach to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and commits to rigorous processing of SEA cases committed by Brazilian peacekeepers. But it lacks the specific, appropriate legislation to tackle these cases, since SEA is not typified in the Brazilian criminal code. It was proposed that the NAP elaboration process could be used as a means to promote debate on the necessary updating of the Brazilian criminal legislation on this matter. However, this proposal was refused by conservative sectors in the Armed Forces, so the NAP is far more progressive when tackling specific measures to prevent SEA abroad than in its own territory.

There were also other key transnational issues that were left out, particularly due to the strong resistance towards including in the NAP any issue considered domestic or exclusively related to the country's sovereignty. For example, Brazil is among the top exporters of weapons in the world. Maybe because of that, there was a strong opposition towards any reference to the impact of armed violence on women and girls. Although it is not clear why there was such strong opposition, it is common knowledge that many retired military personnel work in the Brazilian arms industry and that there is a strong lobby within the Congress and other bodies against stronger legislation to limit arms sales, or even to make them more responsible.²⁵

Another important issue that should be included in the next NAP is human trafficking. Women comprise the majority of victims of this type of crime in Brazil,²⁶ being sold as sexual slaves around the world. Increasing cooperation mechanisms with other countries to combat this violent crime would be one

25 For example, limiting the amount of ammunition sold with the same tracking number or even improving tracking capacity.

26 Agência Brasil, "Mulheres e Meninas São as Principais Vítimas de Tráfico Humano", *Agência Brasil*, 30 July 2018, <http://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/internacional/noticia/2018-07/mulheres-e-meninas-sao-principais-vitimas-de-traffic-humano>.

of the many urgent actions to be included in Brazil's next NAP.

Finally, it is well known that Brazil considers the UN Security Council as a non-democratic body. The fact that the WPS agenda is a Security Council agenda brings challenge towards a more comprehensive approach that includes certain issues that are at the core of Brazil's urban violence problems. On a more positive note, an important advance was made when it comes to the inclusion of a gendered approach to Brazil's policy of receiving refugees and asylum seekers.²⁷

Implications for domestic policy

Although Brazil's NAP is outward-looking, there are pressing domestic issues that could be part of it. Brazil is currently among the most violent countries in the world. In fact, as mentioned above, it is the first when it comes to absolute numbers of homicides.²⁸ It is also one of the countries with the highest rates of femicides and the murder of women.²⁹ Although very limited quality data is available on domestic and sexual violence, statistical estimates show that Brazilian women are taking the burden of the violence epidemic in the country, while the government lacks political will to implement effective policies on the matter.³⁰

The violence problem in Brazil – as in other countries in the region – is not related to situations of formal wars, although it certainly has war-like effects on communities, particularly those where organised crime is settled and dictates the rules. Even though Brazil has solid legislation on domestic violence, its normative framework does not account for the violent effects of urban and rural violence that affects women in Brazil.³¹ Various forms of direct and indirect violence affect women on a daily basis, be it against indigenous women due to land disputes or marginalised black



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women living in communities controlled by organised crime. The fact is that the dynamics of urban and rural violence in this part of the world disproportionately affect women and that impact is taken for granted. A NAP that recognises those effects and includes public security and criminal justice institutions could address, or at least call attention to, the burden on women in Brazil's violence epidemic.

There was an expectation by civil society that, by the end of Brazil's NAP duration, an opportunity to include these issues would arise. However, a very conservative political wing is now in office. Not only is this opportunity lost, but also the advances accomplished so far are under jeopardy. The extension of the plan's duration is, for that reason, a major accomplishment and an attempt to maintain the country's engagement with the WPS agenda, albeit only when it comes to its actions overseas.

CONCLUSION

The outcome of last year's presidential elections in Brazil showed that the coming years will be marked by a turn towards more conservative views in regard to gender and women's rights. As noted, the Brazilian MoD formally announced an extension of the NAP's duration for four more years at the UN in March 2019. The renewal process included all former participants of the Bertha Lutz working group and was led by the MFA. An important development

27 It is important to note that the implementation of the plan, including on issues related to refugees and asylum seekers, has been challenging, particularly due to budgetary constraints.

28 Shasta Darlington, "A Year of Silence Sees Brazil's Murder Rate Hit Record High", *The New York Times*, 10 August 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/10/world/americas/brazil-murder-rate-record.html>.

29 Reuters, "Brazil: Four Women Killed Every Day in 2019, Human Rights Body Says," *The Guardian*, 4 February 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/04/brazil-women-killed-2019-rate-alarming-iachr>.

30 Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, *Anuário Brasileiro de Segurança Pública*, (Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública: São Paulo, 2018), <http://www.forumseguranca.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Anuario-Brasileiro-de-Seguran%C3%A7a-P%C3%BAblica-2018.pdf>.

31 "Maria da Penha Law", Law 11340/06, 7 August 2006, <https://presrepublica.jusbrasil.com.br/legislacao/95552/lei-maria-da-penha-lei-11340-06>.



Leadership and interest of mid-level public servants at the MFA, the MoD and other bodies has been fundamental to the process, but when it comes to the ministries and higher authorities, it could be said that Brazil has a NAP *in spite of* strong political will *against* the agenda.

sustained political will, which some authors suggest is a key element for a high impact NAP.³⁴ In fact, leadership and interest of mid-level public servants at the MFA, the MoD and other bodies has been fundamental to the process, but when it comes to the ministries and higher authorities, it could be said that Brazil has a NAP *in spite of* strong political will *against* the agenda.

- 32 Ministério das Relações Exteriores, "Indicadores e Metas Voluntários do Plano Nacional de Ação Sobre Mulheres, Paz e Segurança", *Ministério das Relações Exteriores*, <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/pt-BR/plano-nacional-de-acao-sobre-mulheres-paz-e-seguranca/20032-indicadores-e-metas-voluntarios-do-plano-nacional-de-acao-sobre-mulheres-paz-e-seguranca>.
- 33 UN Women, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325* (New York, NY: UN Women, 2015), 241, http://wps.unwomen.org/pdf/en/GlobalStudy_EN_Web.pdf.
- 34 See: Miki Jacevic, "What Makes for an Effective WPS National Plan?" *The Strategist*, March 2019; Barbara Miller, Milad Pournik and Aisling Swaine, *Women in Peace and Security Through United Nations Resolution 1325: Literature Review, Content Analysis of National Action Plans and Implementation*, (Washington DC: Institute for Global and International Studies, George Washington University, 2014), https://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/NationalActionPlans/miladpournikanalysisdocs/igis_womeninpeaceandsecuritythroughunsr1325_millerpournikswaine_2014.pdf; Jan Marie Fritz, "Women, Peace and Security: An Analysis of the National Action Plans Developed in Response to UN Security Council Resolution 1325", *Societies Without Borders* 4 (2) (2009): 209-225.

has been the invitation to all members to suggest indicators to monitor progress. The MFA has announced in its official site a set of ten voluntary indicators that it has committed to using.³² However, it was the only organisation to set targets. It is unclear whether the NAP will be implemented more than ever, engaging mid-level civil servants that remained in government agencies is key to keeping the NAP on the agenda for the next four years.

Analysis and studies based on practical experience in building NAPs provide fundamental elements to elaborate high-impact NAPs, such as: an inclusive design process; an established coordination system for implementation; identified and allocated implementation resources; and a results-based monitoring and evaluation plan.³³ In Brazil's NAP process, it could be stated that none of these elements has been fully accomplished. Nor could the WPS agenda in Brazil be described as the focus of strong and

There is room for the WPS agenda in the official speeches of high authorities, of course, mainly when its mention comes with no political cost and can be capitalised upon internationally. But the agenda is not prioritised domestically, and is seen as leftist and ideological, particularly by the current government. What is more, the absence of domestic issues in the NAP has ultimately created a distance between the NAP and women's movements in Brazil. It does not respond to their needs.

While a focus on the consensus was fundamental to enable Brazil to debut among the countries with a NAP and to keep being a part of it, strong content on pressing issues affecting Brazilian women is still necessary. In the meantime, all efforts to implement the current NAP should be highlighted and complemented, particularly in a political context that threatens the voices of women's rights activists and their very existence.



While a focus on the consensus was fundamental to enable Brazil to debut among the countries with a NAP and to keep being a part of it, strong content on pressing issues affecting Brazilian women is still necessary. In the meantime, all efforts to implement the current NAP should be highlighted and complemented, particularly in a political context that threatens the voices of women's rights activists and their very existence.





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