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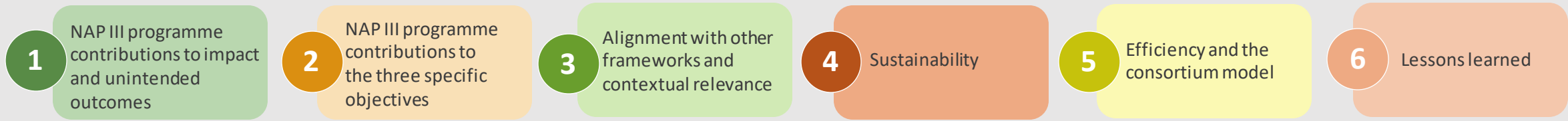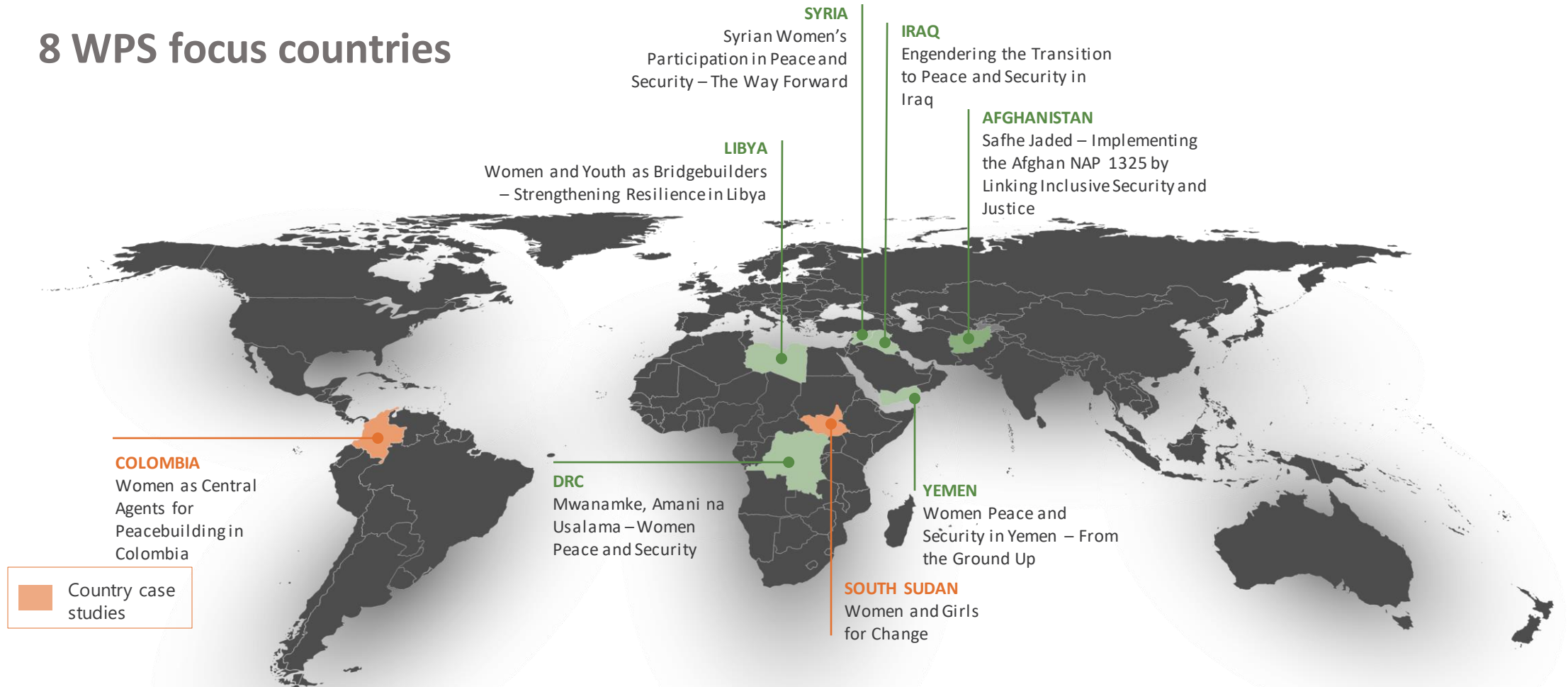
Summary of findings

6 Areas of enquiry

| 1 | NAP III programme contributions to impact and unintended outcomes | 2 | NAP III programme contributions to the three specific objectives | 3 | Alignment with other frameworks and contextual relevance | 4 | Sustainability | 5 | Efficiency and the consortium model | 6 | Lessons learned |

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

8 WPS focus countries

SYRIA
Syrian Women's Participation in Peace and Security – The Way Forward

IRAQ
Engendering the Transition to Peace and Security in Iraq

AFGHANISTAN
Safhe Jaded – Implementing the Afghan NAP 1325 by Linking Inclusive Security and Justice

LIBYA
Women and Youth as Bridgebuilders – Strengthening Resilience in Libya

COLOMBIA
Women as Central Agents for Peacebuilding in Colombia

DRC
Mwanamke, Amani na Usalama – Women Peace and Security

YEMEN
Women Peace and Security in Yemen – From the Ground Up

SOUTH SUDAN
Women and Girls for Change

Country case studies

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Key findings

1 NAP III programme contributions to impact and unintended outcomes

In fragile and conflict affected settings....

Over 80,000 community members reached

Gender

Peacebuilding

SGBV
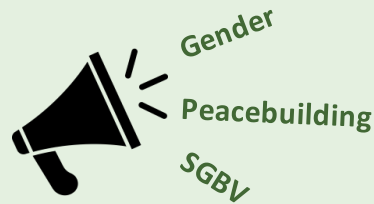
More than 100 CSOs supported

Security and justice actors influenced

Attitudes

Policy

Representation

Knowledge

Change was achieved at various levels from individual to the community level, and within institutions and, in part, at the national level.

Greatest successes were achieved when engaging with pre-existing mechanisms and institutions and where there is a social and political openness to change. Yet, incremental changes that were achieved should not be overlooked and are important initial openings.

Unexpected 'spin-off' effects with beneficiaries inspired to set up their own local level projects & young people becoming more active on social issues.

a) Enhanced protection
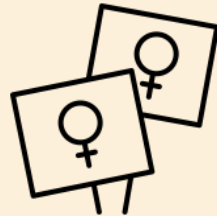
Focus on GBV programming →

Advocacy in security and justice sector

Awareness raising with women & men

Creation of GBV referral pathways

Anecdotal evidence of increased level of awareness & crucial support systems for survivors such as psycho-social support services set up.

Increasing protection for women rights defenders and other socially active women

b) Decrease of harmful gender norms

Radio shows & posters

Targeting men and boys and gatekeepers

Transformative curricula

Empowering women

Training security & justice actors

Arts & sports to build women & youth capacity

Courage and self-esteem developed amongst women to fight for and set up meetings with power holders

Most successful social norm change efforts sought to affect change at multiple levels i.e. with individuals, their social environment, but also institutional and policy level.

C) Equal leverage in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, relief and recovery

Women's participation in political & peace processes → **Local level** → **Institution level** → **National level** → **International level**
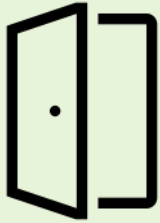
All programmes increased the capacities and skills of thousands of women to better participate and understand existing systems and processes

Creation of new and important openings for women to interact with justice and security providers.

3 Alignment with other frameworks and contextual relevance

Country programmes sought entry points with national frameworks such as national NAPs, governance frameworks and security and justice mechanisms or where absent, international & donor governments.

National

Local

Efforts to **increase linkages and facilitate the flow of information** from the local to the national level led to **national-level gains** with ministries & transitional justice systems

Needs assessments and participatory activities ensured contextual relevance & ability to **adapt to challenges & resistances.**
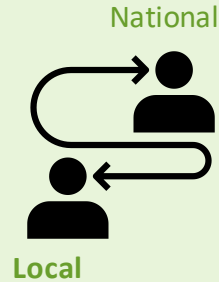
Context challenges & resistances

Husbands object to wives' participation	**Belief that activities undermine family values**
Reluctant security & justice actors	**Shifting security context & shrinking civic space**

4 Sustainability

In Colombia, DRC, Libya, Syria and Yemen, **beneficiaries continued engagement on their own independently** of the programmes - for example Libya partners are working together on the Libya national WPS NAP after the end of the programme.

⊖ *WPS not priority*

⊖ *Gender is sensitive*

⊖ *CS – state actor tension*

⊖ *State actor turnover*

Some influencing of institutional attitudes & policy and increase of female representation.
However, there were **challenges in engaging with state actors** or, in the case of Syria and Libya, **with UN institutions and donor governments** to institutionalize change.

Different country contexts allow for different degrees of achieving sustainable outcomes, with those most affected by armed conflict facing the greatest challenges.

Programme sustainability planning can be strengthened by creating an exit plan during programme design.

Consortium model

The consortia model had strengths and weaknesses. Consortia were able to create synergies; national partners complementing each other's skill sets, increasing reach and mutually enhancing capacities.

In other cases, there was a sense of siloed working, unbalanced power dynamics and unclear lines of accountability.

MEL challenges & the "missing middle"

Challenges with the MEL systems due to lack of co-ordination amongst pen-holders to build a common system of reporting resulting in gaps in evidencing impact.

Activities → **? Missing middle** → **Outcome**

The evidence gap is most prominent between the programme activities and the outcome-level change.

Women participate in decision-making fora

Women's mutual empowerment

Women's representation

Knowledge, skill, attitude change

Training of peace committees

?

We have termed this as the **'missing middle'.** The missing middle is made up of outputs and intermediary outcomes that are **essential markers on the pathway to outcome-level change.** These were **often not articulated or captured in reporting.**

Value for Money

Budget flexibility crucial to supporting adaptation. **Programmes in more complex and rapidly changing environments were more likely to underspend.**

Overheads were generally high which may reflect consortium co-ordination needs.

Value for money was optimised through **adapting** existing successful programming, **flexing activities** to the changing context, **investing in country consortium** relationships and **targeting activities towards sustainability.**

Key findings from the case studies

South Sudan

In conducting the South Sudan case study we found important contributions to change which have been thus far under-reported:

- Success in fostering trust and resilience in communities supporting the functioning of GBV referral mechanisms.

- The country programme helped form relationships and networks for individual and group empowerment amongst women.

- Consciousness raising in individuals, including men and boys and changing dynamics at household level.

Colombia

In conducting the Colombia case study we found important contributions to change which have been thus far under-reported:

- Activities had a significant multiplier effect in the communities and were able to reach more people.

- The country programme created spaces of forgiveness and reconciliation, opening up opportunities for local level reparations.

- Activities increased self-confidence and participation of women in the public sphere
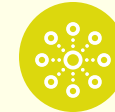
Gender Norm Change

Decrease of harmful gender norms was a key objectives of all programming. In assessing different approaches to social norm change we found:

- Creating synergies was effective; for example, efforts to change individual attitudes & formal & informal sector actors complemented by public-awareness campaigns.

- Baseline data on harmful gender norms missing and unclear what norms were being targeted and why.

- Programmes approached social norm change as linear when in reality, it is not. Increasing knowledge on unequal norms does not necessarily generate attitude change.

Resistances and do no harm: Programmes were met with resistances which were sometimes barriers and sometimes risks to the safety and wellbeing of participants and staff. Programming managed and mitigated risks for example through protection protocols for women's rights activists and in South Sudan putting volunteer well-being at the forefront. Engaging key male actors and gatekeepers is key to mitigation.

The consortium potential: The consortium model offers enhanced reach, mutual learning & efficiency but consensus must first be built and power relations managed.

MEL frameworks: A lack of overall MEL system resulted in reporting gaps, particularly between activities and outcome-level change.

Addressing GBV and social norm change: GBV approaches focused on response and could be strengthened with prevention efforts and complemented through transformational social norm change approaches.

Good practice 1: Adopting a broader and more nuanced approach to gender in WPS. The programme was forward thinking in its conception of gender working with men and women, seeing gender as relational and addressing intersections of sexuality, ethnicity, political standpoints and gender.

Good practice 2: Broad range of WPS programming approaches and themes. The programmes took a broad approach to WPS, including for example elements of economic empowerment, working in schools, engaging with men and boys and including mental health care issues which are new to the WPS field.

Good practice 3: Aligning and linking WPS NAP implementation with national and local frameworks. Efforts in aligning the WPS NAP programming with municipal- , sub-national- and national level policy frameworks and strategies, should be viewed as good practice. It increases sustainability, institutional anchoring and policy coherence while avoiding a duplication of efforts.

Good practice 4: Taking the need for flexibility seriously. Flexibility and adaptability during the implementation phase, be it in responding to programming challenges, shifting national or sub-national contexts or the Covid-19 pandemic, is essential to successfully working in volatile and conflict-affected contexts, and is essential for risk response and mitigation.

Key recommendations

Consortia and ways of working

For partners: Invest more time and resources into building, managing and maintaining consortia management & relationships

For MFA: Encourage links with national frameworks and engagement of implementing partners with Dutch actors, including embassies

For all: Integrate good practices with respect to risk mitigation, do no harm and self-care.

Design, monitoring, evaluation and learning

For partners: Invest more time into design & participatory theories of change, context analysis & MEL processes. Ensure proper baselines are conducted and exit planning

For MFA: Provide guidance on sustainability and evaluation good practice and create opportunities for cross-consortia learning

For all: Link with other WPS donors and actors for learning

Thematic focus areas

For all: Consider how diverse and meaningful women's participation can be achieved and measured beyond number of women in the room

For all: Broaden focus of protection to include prevention and response

For all: Specify which gender norms are being addressed and ensure activities go beyond one-off trainings or campaigns, and engage with men & women's resistance to change

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