

Policy Brief

From Assessment Tool to Strategic Lever

Using the MOWIP Assessment
to Strengthen WPS-NAPs

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The Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations, a multi-stakeholder initiative led by Global Affairs Canada, aims to increase women's meaningful participation in UN Peace Operations.

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The Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) Methodology, developed jointly by DCAF and Gender and Security Sector Lab of Cornell University, is a rigorous and innovative tool to measure the degree to which women can meaningfully participate in peace operations from the perspectives of the troop- and police-contributing countries.

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Executive Summary



Women, Peace and Security (WPS) National Action Plans (NAPs) are now a well-established policy tool, yet their impact – particularly on women’s meaningful participation in security institutions – remains uneven.

Many WPS-NAPs articulate ambitious commitments but lack specificity, robust baselines, institutional ownership and measurable indicators, limiting their ability to drive substantive change (Asante & Shepherd, 2025; Jacevic, 2018; LSE Women, Peace and Security Centre, 2020; UN Women/UN SG reports 2024–2025).

This policy brief starts from the premise that analytical tools such as the **Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peacekeeping (MOWIP)**¹ methodology can help to strengthen WPS National Action Plans by generating actionable evidence on institutional barriers and enablers to women’s participation in security institutions. Drawing on qualitative research across seven countries that have completed a MOWIP assessment (Bangladesh, Canada, Fiji, Ghana, Jordan, Liberia and Uruguay), the brief explores the extent to which MOWIP assessments are used to inform WPS-NAP design and implementation, with a specific focus on women’s meaningful

¹ The Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) Methodology, developed jointly by Cornell GSS Lab and DCAF, is a rigorous and innovative tool to measure the degree to which women can meaningfully participate in peace operations from the perspectives of the troop- and police-contributing countries.

participation – MOWIP’s core analytical strength.

The brief finds that while direct integration of MOWIP findings into WPS-NAP texts is limited, MOWIP assessments are frequently used to shape institutional gender strategies, donor-funded programming and implementation

priorities that sit beneath or alongside WPS-NAPs. Canada stands out as the strongest example of explicit alignment between MOWIP findings and WPS-NAP implementation. In most other contexts, the connection is indirect, partial, or aspirational, often constrained by timing, coordination challenges, resourcing limitations and weak WPS expertise.

The brief argues that MOWIP’s greatest added value lies in its ability to:

1. diagnose institutional barriers to women’s participation;
2. provide concrete, institution-specific recommendations; and
3. generate qualitative and quantitative baselines that can strengthen WPS-NAP monitoring frameworks, including setting targets and indicators.

To realise this potential, stronger intentional alignment between MOWIP processes and WPS-NAP governance is required.

Key message

When MOWIP is strategically aligned with a country's WPS-NAP development it can be a powerful tool to make commitments on women's meaningful participation more specific, measurable, owned and implementable.

This potential is strengthened when MOWIP is not solely framed around peacekeeping, but as an entry point for addressing national institutional barriers for women across security institutions.

1.

Research Rationale and Scope



WPS NAPs are a central mechanism through which states operationalise UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions. Over the last decade, more WPS-NAPs explicitly include Security Institutions (Defence, Interior/Home Affairs) as responsible actors for participation outcomes (e.g. female peacekeeper targets, recruitment initiatives, leadership pipelines).

However, the specificity and measurability of those outcomes vary a lot – many Security Institutions owned targets remain vague, unevenly resourced and weakly monitored, and indicators are often quantitative or absent.

The MOWIP methodology – developed by DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance and the Gender and Security Sector (GSS) Lab at Cornell University – offers a comprehensive framework for analysing barriers to

women’s meaningful participation across ten institutional dimensions, including recruitment, deployment, workplace culture, family policies, and leadership pathways. This research examines the extent to which MOWIP processes and findings are relevant to the development and implementation of WPS-NAPs, particularly under the participation pillar. Specifically, it considers whether and how MOWIP may:

- inform the formulation of more targeted objectives;
- provide evidence-based baselines and indicators; and
- support institutional engagement and ownership of WPS-NAP commitments.

The analysis focuses on women’s meaningful participation in security institutions, reflecting MOWIP’s core analytical strength.

2.

Methodology and Country Selection

The study draws on: 14 Key Informant Interviews (23 stakeholders); Desk review of MOWIP reports, WPS-NAPs, and secondary literature; Comparative analysis across seven country case studies.

Countries were selected to reflect regional diversity and varying stages of MOWIP implementation and WPS-NAP development:

Region	Country	WPS-NAP timeline ²	MOWIP assessment - year(s) ³
Africa	Ghana	1st NAP: 2012-2014; 2nd NAP: 2020–2025	Ghana Armed Forces MOWIP: Data collected Sep 2019 – Feb 2020; Report published Apr 2021
	Liberia	1st NAP: 2009–2013; 2nd NAP: 2019–2023 (extended to 2025)	Liberia Armed Forces MOWIP: Data collected Oct 2021 – Apr 2022; Report published Sep 2022
Americas	Canada	1st NAP: 2010–2016; 2nd NAP: 2017–2022; 3rd NAP: 2023–2029	Canada Armed Forces MOWIP: Data collected Jan 2021 – Apr 2022; Report published May 2022
	Uruguay	1st NAP: 2021–2024	Uruguay Police MOWIP: Data collected Mar 2019 – Apr 2020; Report published May 2022
MENA	Jordan	1st NAP: 2018-2021; 2nd NAP: 2022–2025	Jordan Public Security Directorate MOWIP: Data collected Jul 2019 – Dec 2021; Report published Aug 2023
Asia-Pacific	Bangladesh	1st NAP: 2019–2022 (extended to 2025)	Bangladesh Armed Forces MOWIP: Data collection Jul 2020 – Feb 2022; Report published May 2023
	Fiji	1st NAP: not yet published	Republic of Fiji Military Forces MOWIP ongoing: Data collected May 2025 – Nov 2025; No publicly available final report yet.

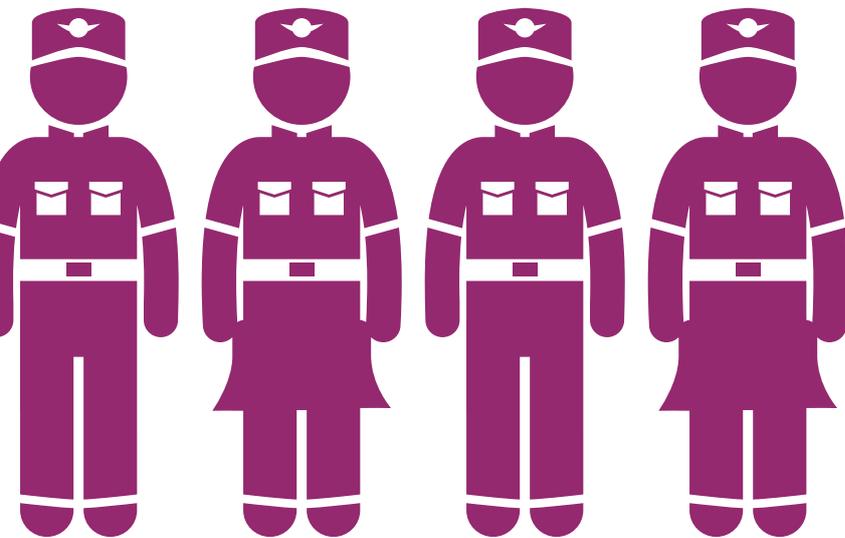
² PeaceWomen. Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans Database. PeaceWomen/Global Network of Women Peacebuilders. Available at: 1325naps.peacewomen.org

³ Elsie Initiative Fund. Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peacekeeping (MOWIP) Reports. Elsie Initiative Fund. Available at: elsiefund.org/resources/mowip-reports

Snowball sampling was used to identify stakeholders from the security institutions, WPS-NAP lead ministries and MOWIP research partners with direct involvement in MOWIP and/or in-depth experience of WPS-NAP development and implementation monitoring in the selected countries. The research questions are provided in the Appendices. Preliminary results were shared for review and comment/critique by interested parties from the WPS-NAP-MOWIP community at a validation workshop.

The study encountered limitations related to stakeholder engagement,

with fewer Key Informant Interviews conducted than originally envisaged, despite extensive follow-up. This may reflect time constraints and competing priorities among participants; however, it may also suggest varying levels of perceived relevance or connection to the research focus. That these challenges arose during the 25th anniversary year of the WPS agenda is notable and may point to broader trends in engagement with WPS-related processes. These limitations necessarily shape the scope of the analysis and the conclusions that can be drawn.



3.

Key Findings

3.1 Degree of MOWIP–NAP Alignment Across Countries

CANADA

From Assessment to Implementation

Canada represents the most advanced example of MOWIP–NAP alignment among the cases reviewed. The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) MOWIP assessment (2022) is explicitly referenced in Canada’s third WPS National Action Plan ‘Foundations for Peace’ (2023–2029) and associated departmental reporting. Rather than treating MOWIP as a standalone diagnostic, CAF integrated findings into the “DNA” of its WPS implementation planning, using the assessment to inform qualitative participation objectives, feminist monitoring and evaluation approaches, and prioritisation of institutional reforms. Importantly, the Canadian case illustrates how MOWIP can be leveraged beyond peacekeeping to address systemic issues – such as institutional culture and addressing gender-based violence – that directly affect women’s participation, retention, and leadership within defence institutions more broadly.

Analysis across the seven countries suggests four broad patterns of alignment between MOWIP processes and WPS-NAPs:

Strong alignment (explicit and operational): Canada – CAF MOWIP findings are referenced in the national WPS-NAP and used to shape departmental implementation plans, qualitative participation targets, and feminist monitoring and evaluation approaches.

Partial or indirect alignment: Ghana – The Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) MOWIP wasn’t concluded in time to inform Ghana’s second WPS-NAP (2020–2025), however, its findings informed GAFs first-ever Gender Policy (launched in December 2023) and donor-funded programming that supports WPS-NAP objectives. **Uruguay** – The National Police of Uruguay MOWIP findings contributed to an institutional gender diagnostic of the National

Police, and to some shared WPS-NAP targets across the Police, Armed Forces and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, though police peacekeeping was not a policy priority. **Jordan** – Public Security Directorate MOWIP shaped institutional strategies and strengthened security sector buy-in under Jordan’s second WPS-NAP (2022–2025), despite limited formal attribution.

Aspirational or future-oriented

alignment: Fiji – Strong expectations that the MOWIP to be published in 2026 will inform a future WPS-NAP and security forces action plans.

Minimal or disconnected alignment:

Liberia – Liberia Armed Forces MOWIP boosted institutional gender efforts but showed weak linkage to WPS-NAP implementation. **Bangladesh** – Armed Forces Bangladesh MOWIP and WPS-NAP processes largely disconnected; MOWIP findings not widely socialized (internally or externally); no opportunity to integrate MOWIP findings in the WPS-NAP extension phase (2022–2025) which remained unchanged between phases, reflecting low political prioritisation of WPS.

GHANA

Indirect but Operational Impact

Ghana demonstrates a common – but often under-recognised – pathway through which MOWIP findings influence WPS outcomes. Although the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) MOWIP assessment (2021) was finalised too late to shape the drafting of Ghana’s second WPS-NAP (2020–2025), its recommendations were subsequently used to inform the GAF Gender Policy and a series of donor-supported initiatives aligned with WPS-NAP objectives. These included targeted recruitment efforts, infrastructure improvements, and training programmes aimed at reducing barriers to women’s participation in peace operations.⁴ The Ghana case highlights how MOWIP can add value at the implementation stage, even when formal WPS-NAP alignment is constrained by timing.

⁴ www.kaiptc.org/elsie-initiative-fund-kaiptc-gaf-national-female-recruitment-campaign-takes-of.

Across most cases, there is **little evidence of systematic mapping of MOWIP findings to WPS-NAP objectives, indicators, or action matrices**. Canada is the notable exception. Timing mismatches between MOWIP assessments and WPS-NAP cycles frequently constrain integration. MOWIP findings are more consistently used to inform: Defence or police gender strategies; internal policy reforms; donor-supported projects aligned with WPS-NAP goals.

This suggests that MOWIP often enters the WPS ecosystem **through institutions rather than through national WPS-NAP texts**. However, there are some interesting findings related to how MOWIPs have indirectly influenced or could influence the WPS agenda in a country, which are discussed in Section 4.

3.2 Indicative Enablers and Constraints

Stakeholder interviews yielded several pertinent observations and recommendations. These insights, while not explored in depth due to the scope of the study, highlight key issues outlined below:

- **Institutional Ownership Matters:** Where MOWIP processes are well socialised within security institutions and championed by senior leadership – uptake of, and engagement with, findings appear stronger. Conversely, limited internal dissemination can constrain relevance beyond a small technical unit.
- **WPS Expertise Is a Critical Enabler:** The extent to which MOWIP findings inform WPS-NAP development and implementation depends heavily on the WPS expertise of those responsible for receiving, translating and applying the findings. Reliance on individual champions may create institutional fragility.
- **Financing Remains a Structural Constraint:** Both WPS-NAP implementation and MOWIP follow-up actions remain highly dependent on external funding. While MOWIP may help to unlock donor resources, it does not in itself address underlying resourcing gaps.

4.

Why MOWIP Matters for More Impactful WPS-NAPs



A core goal of MOWIP is not just to count how many women are deployed and to identify gaps in the deployment structures, but to identify barriers and opportunities across institutional, cultural, operational and normative dimensions within deploying security institutions - issues highly relevant for any WPS-NAP ambition.

Therefore, MOWIP's conceptualization of meaningful participation and its generation of a comprehensive dataset makes it a useful leverage within WPS-NAP processes. MOWIP can serve both as a lens for identifying barriers to women's meaningful participation within security sector institutions, and as a practical tool to inform course correction during WPS-NAP implementation, rather than being confined to future planning cycles.

Using MOWIP to Flag Institutional Barriers

Although MOWIP is developed to identify barriers for women's participation in peacekeeping, **findings demonstrate that the real utility of MOWIP assessments is in providing comprehensive, institution-wide diagnostics of how gendered barriers operate across security forces as a whole.**

In **Canada**, the CAF MOWIP assessment helped interrogate systemic challenges affecting women's retention, leadership and safety across the institution, reinforcing the view that meaningful participation in peacekeeping cannot be separated from conditions within the broader organisation. Similarly, in **Fiji**, the MOWIP was valued precisely because it created a structured space to discuss institutional constraints affecting women across the disciplined forces, well beyond deployment to peace operations.

These cases suggest that MOWIP's strongest contribution may lie in its ability to act as a **gateway analysis** – using peacekeeping as an entry point to address wider institutional gendered structures. For WPS-NAPs, this creates an opportunity to frame women's or equal participation commitments in ways that link peacekeeping objectives to broader security sector transformation, rather than treating peace operations as an isolated policy niche.

Informing Mid-Term WPS-NAP Adjustments

The findings from **Bangladesh, Jordan and Liberia** indicate that MOWIP is under-utilised as a tool for mid-term course correction during WPS-NAP implementation. In these cases, stakeholder responses suggest there has been limited scope to integrate MOWIP recommendations into the WPS-NAP implementation phase i.e. by helping security institutions to refine or redefine WPS-NAP tasks, targets or activities.

Since WPS-NAPs are intended to allow real-time adjustments to be made, MOWIP findings can be equally valuable during mid-cycle reviews. MOWIP assessments generate timely, institution-specific evidence that can help governments and security sector institutions:

- reassess whether existing WPS-NAP participation targets remain realistic or sufficiently ambitious;
- identify stalled or underperforming actions and adjust approaches accordingly;
- refine indicators to better capture qualitative dimensions of participation;
- redirect resources towards reforms with the greatest potential impact.

MOWIP offers six distinct contributions to stronger WPS-NAPs:

- 1 **Evidence-based baselines** for participation objectives;
- 2 **Context-specific diagnostics** beyond numerical targets;
- 3 **Actionable recommendations** suitable for WPS-NAP action matrices;
- 4 **Improved monitoring and evaluation**, including qualitative indicators and baselines;
- 5 **Enhanced institutional engagement and ownership** of the security institutions in WPS-NAP process.
- 6 **Advocacy leverage** for political and financial support for WPS-NAP implementation.

Positioning MOWIP as an input into **mid-term WPS-NAP reviews** would allow states to respond more dynamically to evidence and reduce the lag between diagnosis provided by MOWIP and reform. Used strategically, MOWIP can help shift WPS-NAPs from descriptive

participation (numbers) to **substantive participation** (conditions, influence, retention, and advancement). Taken together, these strategic uses highlight the distinct ways in which MOWIP can strengthen WPS-NAP design, implementation and oversight.

5.

Conclusion: From Assessment Tool to Strategic Lever

This research finds that MOWIP is widely valued as an analytical tool - but still under-utilised - as a tool for strengthening WPS-NAP commitments relating to women's meaningful participation in security sector institutions and peacekeeping operations. Where alignment with WPS-NAP is intentional, MOWIP can sharpen participation commitments, improve accountability and strengthen institutional ownership.

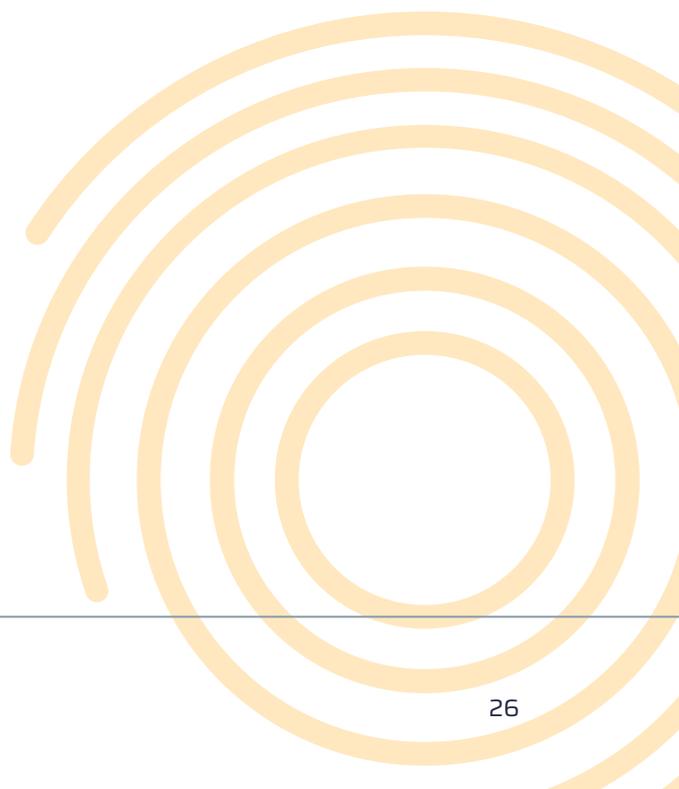
The challenge is not methodological, but strategic. To move from aspiration to impact, MOWIP must be positioned not as a standalone assessment, but as a **core input into the governance, design, and monitoring of WPS-NAPs**. Doing so would represent a significant step towards more credible, measurable, and transformative security sector institutions owned participation commitments under the Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans.

6.

Recommendations

The findings of this brief have direct implications for how Elsie Initiative partners position and support MOWIP processes.

First, they suggest the ongoing **importance of framing MOWIP not solely as a peacekeeping-specific tool, but as an entry point for addressing broader institutional barriers to women’s meaningful participation across defence and security institutions.** Second, they highlight the value of supporting Troop- and Police Contributing Countries to use MOWIP findings dynamically – particularly during mid-term WPS-NAP reviews – rather than limiting engagement to initial assessment delivery.



Top Recommendations at a Glance

- 1 Time MOWIP strategically** – Align assessments with WPS-NAP drafting, refresh, and mid-term review cycles, not only future planning phases.
- 2 Hardwire WPS-NAP analysis into MOWIP** – Require explicit assessment of existing WPS-NAP participation commitments within MOWIP reports.
- 3 Bring WPS-NAP leads into the process** – Involve WPS-NAP coordinating ministries in MOWIP interviews and validation workshops.
- 4 Shift from numbers to conditions** – Use MOWIP to set qualitative participation targets (retention, safety, leadership pathways) that apply across security institutions, not only to peacekeeping deployments.
- 5 Translate findings into action matrices** – Map MOWIP recommendations directly into WPS-NAP implementation tables.
- 6 Invest in dissemination and ownership** – Ensure MOWIP findings are socialised beyond gender units within security sector institutions.
- 7 Use MOWIP for ‘quick wins’** – identify immediately actionable reforms policy fixes (e.g. facilities, deployment criteria) to demonstrate early impact.
- 8 Leverage MOWIP for financing** – Use evidence to mobilise domestic budgets and donor support aligned with WPS-NAP goals.

For Security Sector Institutions undertaking MOWIP

- Align MOWIP timelines with WPS-NAP drafting, mid-term reviews, or refresh cycles.
- Use MOWIP findings to set specific, institution-owned participation targets under WPS-NAPs.
- Translate MOWIP recommendations into “quick wins” and longer-term reforms.
- Ensure wide internal dissemination beyond gender units.

For Ministries responsible for WPS-NAP implementation

- Align MOWIP timelines with WPS-NAP drafting, mid-term reviews, or refresh cycles.
- Involve WPS-NAP coordination bodies in MOWIP interviews and validation workshops.
- Request explicit analysis of existing WPS-NAP commitments within MOWIP assessments.

For International Partners and Donors

- Incentivise alignment between MOWIP findings and WPS-NAP implementation plans.
- Fund follow-on programming that operationalises MOWIP recommendations within WPS-NAP frameworks.

Annexes

Annex 1. Practical Checklist

Using MOWIP Strategically - A Self-Assessment Checklist for Governments and Security Sector Institutions

Use the questions below to assess whether (and how) a MOWIP assessment is being used to strengthen your WPS-NAP:

Governance & Timing

- Is the MOWIP assessment timed to inform WPS-NAP drafting, refresh, or mid-term review cycles?
- Are WPS-NAP lead ministries formally involved in the MOWIP process (design, interviews, validation)?

Design & Alignment

- Does the MOWIP explicitly analyse existing WPS-NAP participation commitments?
- Are MOWIP recommendations mapped to specific WPS-NAP objectives or actions?

Participation & Substance

- Are WPS-NAP targets designed to address conditions, culture, retention, and advancement of women in security institutions?
- Are qualitative indicators (e.g. safety, leadership pathways, institutional culture) included?

Ownership & Dissemination

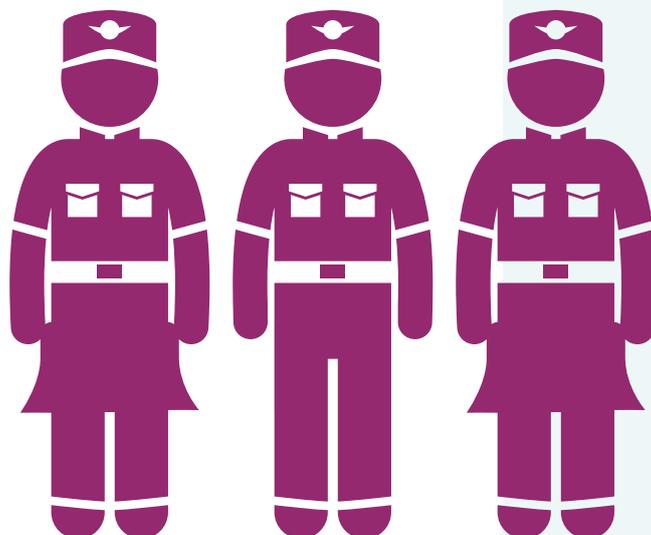
- Have MOWIP findings been disseminated widely across security institutions?
- Are senior leaders visibly championing implementation of findings?

Implementation & Resourcing

- Are MOWIP findings informing institutional strategies and workplans relevant for WPS-NAP?
- Are MOWIP findings being used to mobilise domestic budgets and/or donor support for the WPS-NAP?

Annex 2. Research Questions

1. Has your country used the findings of the MOWIP to inform your Women Peace and Security (WPS) National Action Plan (NAP)?
 - **If yes**, how were the findings used?
 - **What key lessons** emerged from this process?
2. Does your current WPS-NAP include a specific objective or component on women's meaningful participation in security institutions?
 - **How would you assess** the strength and clarity of this objective?
3. Were security institutions engaged in the development of the WPS-NAP, particularly in setting, implementing and monitoring targets related to women's participation?
 - **If yes**, how were they engaged?
 - **If not**, what were the main barriers?
 - **Did the MOWIP** process influence the setting of these targets or strengthen security sector engagement? If so, how?
4. If MOWIP findings were not used to inform the WPS-NAP, how could they have been used?
 - **What type** of data or analysis on women's participation in the security sector would have strengthened the WPS-NAP?
5. Are there plans to use MOWIP findings to inform the next WPS-NAP?
 - **If yes**, in what ways?
6. What recommendations would you offer to other countries that have completed a MOWIP and wish to use it to inform their WPS-NAP?



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