

FAQ

EWIPA and WPS

This brief provides answers to Frequently Asked Questions on EWIPA, the WPS agenda, and how Canada can protect women and girls.

What is WPS?

WPS refers to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, centered around the UN Security Council's resolution 1325, and is a result of long-term lobbying from female-led grassroots organizations, and feminist advocates. WPS recognizes the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls and aims to increase feminine participation in conflict resolution and prevention, engage in policy deliberation and implementation, offer protection for women and girls in conflict zones, and provide support during recovery periods.



What are NAPs?

National Action Plans are used to create domestic and foreign policies that align with a commitment to handle a specific issue or topic. Canada has an NAP for WPS, called "Foundations for Peace".



“Foundations for Peace” is set to expire in 2029, and includes six pillars that can shape domestic and foreign campaigns for gender equality, prioritizing women’s participation in all aspects of peace and security.

Foundations for Peace is led by Global Affairs Canada, in collaboration with other federal agencies.

The six pillars of “Foundations for Peace” are;

- Building and sustaining peace
- Security, justice and accountability
 - Only pillar of CNAP that mentions disarmament!
- Crisis response
- Sexual and gender-based violence
- Leadership and capabilities
- Inclusion

What is EWIPA and the EWIPA Political Declaration?

EWIPA (Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas) refers to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, such as cities, towns, and refugee camps. When EWIPA is used, it impacts civilians and civilian infrastructure including schools, hospitals, apartment buildings/homes, and community centres.

EWIPA is defined and recognized internationally through the “Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas.” This Declaration was finalized on June 17th, 2022, and has been endorsed by 90 countries, including Canada. The Political Declaration aims to reduce civilian harm from the use of explosive weapons in cities and towns. It commits States to avoid using explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas, strengthen protection of civilians, improve data collection on civilian harm, and support victims and affected communities. While it is not legally binding, it acts as a complement to pre-existing international humanitarian law, which is mandatory and enforceable. The Political Declaration aims to deter States and non-state actors from using explosive weapons in populated areas, and to consider the protection of civilians throughout all decision-making processes.





What is INEW?

The International Network of Explosive Weapons is a group of global NGOs working collaboratively to prevent the use of EWIPA. Co-founded by MAC and a number of disarmament, humanitarian, and human rights organizations, INEW focuses on the humanitarian consequences of EWIPA, advocates for policy change, and promotes NAP implementation. INEW fully supports the EWIPA Political Declaration and calls for all States to adopt its principles.

How is EWIPA connected to WPS?

Women and girls are disproportionately impacted by EWIPA. These gendered impacts can greatly influence policies, prevention strategies, and international agreements, including the EWIPA Political Declaration. The EWIPA Political Declaration strongly encourages women's participation in decision making and policy implementation, which supports the WPS agenda, and contributes to the four overarching pillars; participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery. The most effective method for preventing harm to women and girls is to eliminate the use of EWIPA fully, and to impose the proper sanctions, and consequences on perpetrators.



How do the direct and indirect effects of EWIPA have gendered impacts?



Direct Effects →

The direct effects of EWIPA include immediate deaths, serious injuries, and structural damage. According to data from the UNIDIR, women and children make up the majority of EWIPA casualties, and recent years have seen increasing death rates, especially in Palestine. Displacement and homelessness is also an immediate consequence, adding an additional burden to women and girls to find new shelter for themselves and their families. Completing daily activities and responsibilities also becomes increasingly difficult, as a result of the unsafe conditions created by EWIPA. Increases in miscarriages, and birthing complications for pregnant women are also reported due to destruction or reduced operations of hospitals and medical centres.

Long-term Medical Challenges/Disabilities:

As a result of long-term medical challenges, women and girls take on the added responsibility of caring for their family members, or providing medical support. Additionally, women and girls experiencing physical and mental disabilities because of EWIPA are even more likely to face marginalization and discrimination than able-bodied women and girls. These disabilities also hinder their ability to further their education, or find employment, especially in a post-conflict environment.

Indirect Effects

Increased Gender Inequality:

This includes discrimination and marginalization, limited access to education and healthcare for women and girls, and a drastic rise in reports of GBV, SGBV, and domestic abuse of all forms.

Damage to Housing, Infrastructure, etc.

Increased financial burdens due to lost income/employment, forced displacement, and food and resource scarcity all disproportionately affect women and girls when experiencing EWIPA. Women typically bear primary responsibility for caring for their families and managing household duties, and EWIPA exacerbates this burden by creating additional pressures on them to continue providing for their families. Additionally, the lingering chemicals and pollutants from explosive weapons can have lasting health implications for everyone. Finally, according to UNIDIR, women and girls are less likely to return to school or continue their education once these institutions open again.



How is AI relevant to EWIPA and WPS agenda?

According to the [Research Network on WPS](#), AI has the ability to exacerbate the harmful effects of EWIPA by reinforcing gender inequality and discrimination. AI does this by targeting women and girls specifically in conflict areas and ‘attack’ zones, and diminishes opportunities to hold perpetrators accountable. However, AI also has the ability to assist with implementation of the WPS agenda when discussing EWIPA, as it can be a useful resource for conflict recovery, prevention, and data collection that uses a gendered approach.

What obligations does Canada have under CNAP in regard to EWIPAs?



Focus Area 2: Security, Justice and Accountability, Focus Area 3: Crisis Response, Focus Area 4: Sexual and Gender Based Violence, and Focus Area 6: Inclusion are the four pillars of the Canadian National Action Plan (CNAP) especially relevant to EWIPA. Canada has an obligation to increase women’s participation in all forms of decision-making and crisis response intervention. This also includes encouraging female representation within international organizations and governing bodies focused on security, justice, and accountability. Canada also has an obligation to implement intersectional approaches to crisis response initiatives and strategies, including offering support for victims, displaced people, and women and girls affected by EWIPA.

How can the WPS agenda help us implement the EWIPA Political Declaration?

The four pillars of the WPS agenda provide a useful framework for implementing the EWIPA Political Declaration.

Participation

The Participation pillar of the WPS agenda calls for women's equal participation in decision making and policy drafting. Increasing women's participation in policy making for both prevention and harm reduction would implement sections 3.1 to 3.4 of the Political Declaration which are focused on policy, practice, and training.

Protection

The Protection pillar of the WPS agenda calls for the protection of women and girls from all forms of gendered violence, including sexual violence, during conflicts, and throughout recovery and re-building periods. The Protection pillar creates a framework for States to continue to uphold legally binding international humanitarian law, which supports Sections 2.2, 4.4, and 4.5 of the Political Declaration. These sections strongly encourage protection and support, including access to services and resources for survivors of gender-based violence, and sexual violence.

Prevention

The Prevention pillar of the WPS agenda calls for increased preventative measures from conflict, and prevention of gender and sexual violence.

Eliminating the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and imposing harsh sanctions and consequences on States who do use EWIPA is the most effective method for preventing harm to women and girls. The final commitment in the EWIPA Political Declaration is to actively promote the Declaration and to pursue its effective implementation by the greatest possible number of States, which is extremely important in preventing further harm by EWIPA.

Relief and Recovery

The Relief and Recovery Pillar of the WPS agenda identifies the consequences of conflict for women and girls and calls for recovery targets that are gender specific. Relief and Recovery for gendered consequences, and targeted support mechanisms for women and girls can be implemented using the WPS agenda, and aligns with the commitments made in sections 2.2, 4.4 and 4.5 of the political Declaration. This would include clearance, and risk education for explosive remnants of war as a result of EWIPA. One example is the UN Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War (Protocol V to the 1980 CCW Convention), which is a legally binding international agreement, which Canada has committed to.

What are the key takeaways for understanding the links between EWIPA and WPS?

The WPS agenda and CNAP frame how gendered impacts of EWIPA should be addressed. Women and girls face disproportionate harm from EWIPA, including higher casualty rates, displacement, and increased gender-based violence. The EWIPA Political Declaration and INEW advance global efforts to reduce these harms, while Canada is obligated to promote women's leadership, inclusive crisis response, and GBV prevention.

Overall, the WPS pillars offer a practical framework for implementing the EWIPA Declaration and improving protection and accountability. Conversely, the EWIPA Political Declaration is a tool that can be used to protect women and girls from the harmful effects of explosive weapons in populated areas and strengthen the goals of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda.

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