

SUPPORTING THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL IN APPLYING ITS THEMATIC AGENDAS TO ITS COUNTRY-SPECIFIC WORK

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The Security Council faces substantial challenges in applying the growing normative framework of its thematic agendas with its country-specific deliberations. Among others, the former S-5 Group¹ highlighted these shortcomings in its comprehensive work on the reform of working methods of the Security Council.² These challenges are apparent in particular throughout the process of mandating or renewing mandates of UN Missions that include Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) provisions.

With the WPS and CAAC agendas the Council faces two specific hurdles: first, to ensure that it properly understands the situation on the ground; and second, to apply the framework of its thematic agendas to those situations. The latter problem is often exacerbated by a lack of resources, knowledge, and coordination. Due to the complex nature of the framework of the WPS and CAAC agendas – which consist of numerous resolutions and presidential statements – country-specific experts have difficulties operationalizing the agenda. In theory, in bigger UN delegations with more staff and resources, country-specific experts will pass the drafts of mission mandates on to their colleagues dealing with thematic issues to solicit comments and suggestions. However, even in bigger delegations, the staff and resources attributed are not sufficient to ensure that the obligations mandated by the WPS and CAAC agendas are applied in a consistent manner. Within smaller delegations, country-specific experts have to generate the “thematic” input largely independently, which, given the busy agenda of the Council, can be very challenging. The poor record of the Security Council in mainstreaming its thematic agendas into its country-specific work is therefore mainly caused by a lack of capacity, rather than by a lack of political will.

A workshop recently convened by the Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination at Princeton University (LISD), the Permanent Mission of Liechtenstein to the United Nations in New York, and Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict confirm this claim. At the workshop, Security Council members described in great detail the substantial expertise and amount of time required to ensure the relevant WPS and CAAC provisions are accurately included in all relevant draft mandates for UN Missions. Recent analysis by the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and

1. Costa Rica, Jordan, Liechtenstein Singapore, Switzerland

2. A/66/L.42/Rev.2, operative paragraph16.

Security (NGOWG) further confirms the Council's inconsistency in applying its Women, Peace and Security agenda in its country-specific deliberations. According to the analysis spanning from August 1, 2011 through July 31, 2012 only 30 out of 48 (63%) of the relevant resolutions adopted by the Security Council contained a reference to the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Regular briefings by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to the Security Council's informal group on protection of civilians, which allows for bringing issues related to the thematic agendas to the attention of the Security Council, are a positive example for addressing this obstacle within an already existing framework. However, to increase its impact on the implementation of the WPS and CAAC agendas, representatives of both the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict as well as the Office of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict should be allowed to attend the briefing of the group.

In a further attempt to address the lacking implementation of the WPS and CAAC agendas NGOs and UN Member States have started to support the Security Council by developing innovative tools, such as mobile applications, "Monthly Action Points" and "Monthly Updates." By providing specific recommendations and language for Council members the Monthly Action Points (MAPs) submitted by the NGOWG were the first tool that, provided on a monthly basis, systematically supported the Council in mainstream the thematic agenda into its country specific work.³ An evaluation of the tool revealed that it is distributed to more than 2,000 active email contacts, which include Member State contacts at UN headquarters and capitals, UN mission contacts, as well as NGOs/CSOs. The average open rate of approximately 20% is quite high, as is the impressive 19% click through rate. Member States, including UN Security Council members, are among those who most regularly open and click through the MAPs. More anecdotal evidence suggests that the MAPs are used by many of the WPS experts in UN delegations, which, in addition to UN and NGO partners, provide constant feedback regarding its utility. Based on the demand by Council members, this tool has been replicated and further developed for the Children and Armed Conflict agenda. Watchlist on Children and Armed conflict is now providing Monthly Updates for those experts and organizations working within Children and Armed Conflict agenda.⁴

New tools like the mobile phone applications on Children and Armed Conflict (by Watchlist) and Women, Peace and Security (by PeaceWomen) can further support Council members in applying the obligations derived from its thematic agenda in its country-specific work. The core function of these applications lies in making the complex framework of the agendas accessible by breaking them down into specific topics. Additionally, a select overview of the Council's most relevant previously-agreed upon language, available through the applications within seconds, not only significantly reduces the time of research for this language but also ensures that the Council is not falling behind its own previously set standards. In the above mentioned Children and Armed Conflict workshop at Princeton University, Security Council members also described in great detail how the applications are used on a daily basis.⁵ Both applications are liv-

3. See <http://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/advocacy/map>.

4. See <http://watchlist.org/advocacy/monthly-updates>.

ing documents as they are constantly updated and tailored towards the needs of Council members. For instance, a checklist for drafting new mandates that is included in the Children and Armed Conflict App has been updated and expanded based on the feedback received from Security Council members during the workshop. Based on the concept of the Women, Peace and Security App, Switzerland is currently developing an application aimed at providing access to the complete legal basis of women's human rights. To increase its usability, after an initial download, the core function of these applications requires no internet connection.

The key advantage of the mobile applications as well as the Monthly Updates and Monthly Actions Points is that they are concise and to the point. They allow Council members to quickly and easily locate specific language that can be “copied and pasted” into new or renewed Mission mandates. At the end of the day, policy impact is of course always difficult to measure, and in fact one of the primary challenges in implementing the WPS and CAAC agendas is the lack of official tracking and monitoring of the policy developments in the UN Security Council. As noted by Global Observatory's Marie O'Reilly, “there's no doubt that making key documents and language on child-protection issues more readily available to policymakers, practitioners, and reporters who need to react quickly is a positive step.”⁶ Since the launch of these Apps two years ago, numerous Council members and Member states have gone out of their way to express their appreciation for this tool, and several Member states have commissioned the creation of similar Apps tailored for specific agendas, which is testament to their user-friendliness and utility. These tools should therefore be further developed, taking into account feedback provided by Security Council members.

Another promising tool which true potential for the development of the thematic agendas of the Security Council is yet to be utilized are thematic workshops organized in close partnership between UN Member States including members of the Security Council, NGOs and the academic institutions. Workshops on the WPS and CAAC agendas recently convened by LISD and the Permanent Mission of Liechtenstein to the United Nations in New York – in Berlin, Schaan, Liechtenstein, and Princeton – have proven to be a valuable tool in introducing new Council members to the agendas and providing a platform for the discussion of country-specific questions among a variety of actors from the regions concerned, from civil society, and from academia. An analysis of the UN Mission mandates discussed in the workshops indicates that key recommendations have been implemented by the Security Council. UN Member States should expand the cooperation with Security Council members, NGOs, and academics to regularly organize workshops to further develop the thematic agendas of the Council and to provide new Council members with the expertise necessary to address WPS and CAAC concerns in country-specific mandates. It is imperative that these workshops include thematic as well as country-specific experts from Security Council members, in particular those of the “penholder” delegations⁷.

Through innovative solutions like the WPS and CAAC Apps, and workshops that bring together key stakeholders for open dialogue, the UN Security Council will be able to take steps toward

6. Marie O'Reilly, “A New Tool for Influencing Policy: The Children and Armed Conflict App,” *Global Observatory*, October 18, 2012, <http://theglobalobservatory.org/analysis/371-a-new-tool-for-influencing-policy-the-children-and-armed-conflict-app.html>.

7. Penholders are those Security Council members that write the first draft of a resolution.

addressing the challenges posed by the better mainstreaming of its thematic agendas into its county-specific deliberations.