Parliaments and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda Case Study: KYRGYZSTAN

1. Introduction

This case study has been produced in support of the UNDP Handbook on Parliamentary Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. It is one of three case studies that were commissioned by UNDP as part of the pilot phase of the “Parliamentary Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda Project” (Parliaments and WPS Project) which was implemented during 2018 and will soon commence Phase 2 from 2019-2020.

The three case studies capture the work supported by UNDP in three legislatures – Kyrgyzstan, as well as Sri Lanka and Sierra Leone – as part of the Parliaments and WPS Project. These countries were chosen through an “expression of interest” process, whereby UNDP Country Offices in each country volunteered to be part of the Project. As a result of this self-selection process, the case studies represent a variety of country contexts in relation to women, peace and security (WPS). All three have suffered from conflict, though the conflicts had very different durations, causes, participants and trajectories. All three are in what is commonly described as the “post-conflict” phase, though of course, in reality this means all three are also still focused on ongoing peacebuilding.

Purpose of this case study

This case study reflects a process of engagement through the Parliaments and WPS Project over the course of approximately nine months, from mid-2018 to early 2019. The case study seeks to describe the work undertaken with the national legislature through the Project in each priority country, within the context of the overarching national WPS priorities and issues facing the country. It seeks to explain both how the Project worked with each legislature and what follow up approaches were agreed and implemented. It is hoped that this information could be useful to other legislatures seeking to progress the WPS agenda through their own parliamentary processes. The case study should be ready alongside the UNDP Handbook on Parliamentary Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

This case study is a good example of a country with an existing WPS National Action Plan endorsed by the Government developing a complementary Parliamentary WPS National Action Plan, which identifies the specific actions to be prioritised by MPs. It is also an example of how MPs can use their representative and constituency outreach role to engage local stakeholders and communities in building their understanding of the WPS agenda and using it as a discussion point for identifying locally-specific WPS challenges, that can then be used to inform national level efforts to tackle priority WPS issues.
The Project was implemented through an international consultant, in collaboration with a local NGO – Innovative Solutions Inc – which was recruited through a competitive tender process by the UNDP Country Office. The international consultant and Innovative Solutions worked together closely with the national UNDP Country Office. A UNDP Parliamentary Support Project (PSP) was also being initiated at around the same time as this Parliaments and WPS Project was being moved forward, with the two teams working together where possible, though Innovative Solutions took the lead in-country on issues relating to WPS.

Innovative Solutions worked with the international consultant to develop a background paper capturing the key WPS issues in Kyrgyzstan. This background paper has been used to inform the analysis in this case study. It was also used to underpin a national WPS Workshop held in November 2018 which brought together 7 women MPs from different political parties and factions with women’s NGOs and officials to discuss WPS priorities and agree an action plan (see Annex 1 for detailed Parliamentary WPS Action Plan). UNDP is now supporting implementation of that WPS Action Plan, as described below.

### 2. National Parliament

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<tr>
<td>Name of Parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>System of government</td>
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<td>Type of electoral system:</td>
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<td>Structure of Parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>Last presidential election</td>
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<tr>
<td>Last legislative election</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total number of MPs</td>
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<td>Number of women MPs</td>
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The national legislature in Kyrgyzstan is called the *Jogorku Kenesh* and operates as a unicameral body with responsibilities for law-making, budget approval and review, oversight/control and representation/constituency functions. In the years following Kyrgyzstan’s independence from the former USSR, the legislature was relatively weak, with a strong presidential system in place. Between independence in 1991 and 2010, Kyrgyzstan had only two presidents – President Askar Akayev (1991-2005) and President Kurmanbek Bakiyev (2005-10) – both of whom repeatedly attempted to strengthen the powers of the President and both of whom were forced to resign following people’s uprisings.¹

In 2010, there were national protests resulted in the ousting of President Bakiyev and were followed by major constitutional reforms to rebalance the separation of powers between the three branches of government. Following a referendum in June 2010, Kyrgyzstan moved from a presidential to a parliamentary system, with a weaker presidency and a stronger role for the Prime Minister. These reforms were also intended to strengthen the oversight of the legislature over the executive branch.

The process of legislative strengthening is ongoing, as Members of Parliament (MPs) continue to evolve their own parliamentary culture which recognises the legislature as a stronger, independent

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arm of government. UNDP is now implementing a Parliamentary Support Project with the Jogorku Kenesh which will: (1) support Parliament to improve oversight of the executive and provide an opportunity for citizens to be included in the process of decision- and policy-making; and (2) empower civil society actors for more effective monitoring and influencing the performance of parliamentary and state accountability institutions, allowing citizens to hold the Parliament and government accountable and benefit from a more accessible, effective and responsive government. The project has a 10-year time horizon, with the first 4-year phase launched in May 2017.

3. Country Context

Since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325) in 2000, Kyrgyzstan has suffered from two revolutionary bouts of conflict – one in 2005 which saw protests against the President Akayev and another in early 2010 which resulted in the ousting of President Bakiyev – and a more ethnically based violent conflict in mid-2010. Following political protests which resulted in President Bakiyev’s resignation in April 2010, an interim government came to power which was led by the first ever-female President of Kyrgyzstan, Hon Roza Otunbayeva. An election and reform plan was proposed in April 2010 which eventually resulted in constitutional amendments which were put to a referendum in June 2010. The public referendum overwhelmingly approved a reform to move from presidential system to a parliamentary system. The new constitution also allowed parliament to choose the prime minister and play a key role in forming the new government.

During this transition period, armed clashes occurred between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan, primarily in the cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad. The clashes were unprecedented and resulted in loss of life and economic damage, with one report stating that the violence resulted in “hundreds dead, thousands injured, thousands of properties burnt to the ground and the displacement of 400,000 people, including 100,000 refugees in neighbouring Uzbekistan”. Although these events lasted around only one month, they had a huge impact on the country, highlighting the ethnic and political divisions that still bubbled beneath the surface. During the violence, state institutions were unprepared to respond, with public services substantially affected. In contrast, non-governmental organizations, including women’s NGOs, demonstrated their own capacities to support conflict prevention and peacebuilding skills.

Women were active during the 2005 and 2010 political protests, but during the 2010 conflict in the South, incidents of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) were widely reported. As a result of the violence perpetrated against women and girls and the subsequent fragile protection system for women and girls, the number of early marriages increased across the country after 2010. The post-conflict needs assessments for Kyrgyzstan identified a number of factors weakening women’s rights, including nationalism, inequality and discrimination. Inequality is manifested in the extremely low representation of women in the political space and in the economic sphere. Discrimination in the labour market has become part of the culture of employers. Public and state media also often support sociocultural norms and stereotypes that reinforce inequality and discrimination against women. Violent extremism is also on the rise, with young people and women also being increasingly drawn into such activities, alongside men. The international NGO “Working Group on Women, Peace and Security” observed that “Women in Kyrgyzstan continue to face discriminatory traditions and high levels of gender-based violence and human trafficking, resulting in low political

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participation rates....[W]omen’s rights and freedoms erode through religious conservatism, both Islamic and Christian. Despite recent laws increasing the penalty for the widely-practiced sex crime, the practice of “bride kidnapping” remains especially prevalent”.4

To this day, unresolved regional conflicts remain a problem for the state, as are disputes over border demarcation (caused by access and distribution of resources) that inhibit peace processes in a number of areas of the Kyrgyz Republic. Unresolved border disputes have had a negative impact on the socio-economic development of border areas. The renaissance of a patriarchal culture, the radicalization of society, increasing Islamization and violent extremism also continue to provide fertile ground for armed conflict and violence.

4. WPS National Action Plan & other frameworks

Since independence in 1991, numerous national strategies and programs were adopted and implemented to address gender equality, including five consecutive National Action Plans (NAP) on Gender Equality in the Kyrgyz Republic since 2002 (for 2002-2006, 2007-2010, 2012-2014, 2015-2017 and now 2018-2020) and a long-term Strategy on Gender Equality which applies until 2020.5 Kyrgyzstan also has a wide range of normative legal frameworks on gender equality, including a strong non-discrimination clause in the Constitution. The country has also enacted a number of special laws on gender equality, including the law “On state guarantees of equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women” (2008) and the law “On protection and protection from family violence” (2017).6

In relation to the WPS agenda specifically, Kyrgyzstan took action to develop specific a WPS National Action Plan following the conflict in 2010. The first process was initiated after lobbying by women’s groups which resulted in the Committee for International Affairs, Defense and Security of the Jogorku Kenesh considering the issue in April 2012 and calling for action to develop a NAP. The First WPS NAP ran from 2013-14, the Second WPS NAP from 2016-2017 and the third and current WPS NAP from 2018-2020.

Development of the third WPS NAP was preceded by a study supported by UNODC, UN Women and Innovative Solutions, which aimed to analyse the reasons for the failure to fully implement the Second WPS NAP, as well as the current challenges and opportunities to inform the new NAP. Seven focus group discussions were supported throughout the country which included NGOs, local self-government bodies and government agencies. Based on the desk-based research and consultations a number of recommendations were made:

• Considering the current situation in the country (“no conflict”), the priorities focused on preserving and maintaining peace and ensuring stable and sustainable development.
• Focus on the main threats of today: radicalism and lack of education for girls and women, religious extremism, inter-ethnic conflicts, border conflicts.
• Maintain a focus on strengthening and promote women’s advancement to decision-making levels in conflict resolution processes.
• Continue educational work, training seminars and workshops on the rights of girls & women.
• Strengthen the interaction of government agencies, local self-government bodies with civil society organizations, activists of the women’s security movement, and conflict prevention.

5 Ibid. Annex 2.
6 Ibid.
In September 2018, the Government endorsed the Third WPS NAP, which has three goals:

1. Strengthening the role and participation of women, including at the decision-making level, in activities aimed at preserving peace and security.
2. Strengthening the interaction of government agencies, local governments and civil society in order to prevent conflicts and the risks of violence against women and girls, as well as measures to address the effects of crisis situations.
3. Improving the system of protection and taking into account the special needs and requirements of women and girls in emergency situations.

However, there is still no matrix of indicators attached. Unlike most other UN processes or agendas, no state reporting is required at global level, and no reports are required by the WPS NAP either. National WPS NAP progress reporting needs to be improved, including reporting to the Jogorku Kenesh. Likewise, there is no budget attached to the WPS NAP with work on WPS being reliant on donor funding. The Jogorku Kenesh finance committees should be more engaged in reviewing WPS resourcing (or lack of it).

5. Parliamentary action to address WPS issues

In the previous WPS NAPs, the role of the Jogorku Kenesh was missing, which, in turn, provided challenge in terms of implementation and monitoring. However, in the initial draft WPS NAP 2018-20, the Jogorku Kenesh was specifically included under the Goal 1, Objective 1.1 (see Table 1 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Measures / activities</th>
<th>Implementers</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Strengthening of the parliamentary oversight, with the participation of members of the Jogorku Kenesh, on implementation of the Action Plan for the UNSCR 1325.</td>
<td>1.1.1. Arranging national forums in all regions of the country on strengthening the role of women in maintaining peace and security</td>
<td>The Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Forum of Women Members of the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic, the SALSGiR, the local self-government bodies, the MIA</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.1.2 Holding parliamentary hearings on implementation of the AP 1325</td>
<td>Profile committee of the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic, the MIA</td>
<td>2020</td>
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Notably however, before the Third WPS NAP 2018-20 was endorsed, the elements relating to the Jogorku Kenesh were removed, in recognition of the Jogorku Kenesh’s separation from the executive branch and the need for the legislature to lead the identification of its own WPS priorities. Accordingly, as part of this Parliaments and WPS Project, Innovative Solutions engaged with the Jogorku Kenesh Women’s Forum of Deputies, relevant parliamentary committees and parliamentary staff to begin an initial conversation on the WPS agenda and how UNDP could support Parliament to move the agenda forward. Subsequently, in November 2018, UNDP and Innovative Solutions organised a 2-day national WPS Meeting in Bishkek. The meeting was hosted with seven female Members of Parliament (unfortunately, no male MPs participated), as well as stakeholders from the state agencies, NGOs and the private sector. The workshop aimed both to provide information and data to MPs and stakeholders, as well as to participatorily identify priority
issues to work on. MPs in attendance agreed to finalize their own WPS Action Plan and submit it to the appropriate Committees of Parliament for action.

Desk research and discussions with MPs demonstrated a lack of awareness and understanding of the WPS agenda among state actors at the national and local levels. Accordingly, it was agreed with the Women’s Forum of Deputies that UNDP would support MPs to conduct Regional Forums in all 7 provinces of the country to inform local level stakeholders, wider CSOs networks and communities themselves about the WPS agenda and discuss local-level priorities, to feed into national discussions by MPs. Notably, these forums were already envisaged in the initial national Third WPS NAP (see Table 1 above). During December 2018 and January 2019, Innovative Solutions worked with MPs to organise and implement all seven WPS Regional Forums (see Table 2 below). The Forums served a platform to discuss the localization of the WPS agenda, in light of the special context, challenges, and opportunities of each region. The regional Forums gathered important insights for the MPs and the team on the priority issues for WPS agenda implementation.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Event, Place</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number of Pax*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kick off Workshop, Bishkek</td>
<td>26-27 November 2018</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Regional Forum, Batken oblast</td>
<td>4 December 2018</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Regional Forum, Osh oblast</td>
<td>5 December 2018</td>
<td>90</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Regional Forum, Jalal-Abad oblast</td>
<td>17 December 2018</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Regional Forum, Chui oblast</td>
<td>19 December 2018</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Regional Forum, Issyk-Kul oblast</td>
<td>24 December 2018</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Regional Forum, Talas oblast</td>
<td>10 January 2019</td>
<td>69</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Regional Forum, Naryn oblast</td>
<td>16 January 2019</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Parliamentary Public Hearing, Bishkek</td>
<td>22 January 2019</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>552</strong></td>
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The Regional Forums were well-attended, as a result of the early involvement of provincial administrations and local CSO partners. Participants came from across society, including state agencies, local councils, law enforcement bodies, religious leaders, NGOs, women’s organizations, the media and members of the networks of CSOs working on WPS. The Forums were facilitated by Innovative Solutions, the CSO leading this work with UNDP. The Regional Forums were also very well-covered on the Parliament's website, in the national and local media (TV, radio and internet news sources) and on social media.

![Diagram 1. Representation of the participants, %](image-url)
UNDP and Innovative Solutions also organized a national WPS workshop in late January 2019 to be hosted by MPs to discuss practical actions that Parliament will take in support of WPS. In the course of discussions, the following recommendations were made:

- Members of the Forum of Women MPs can play an important role in ensuring that more regular monitoring is taking place by proposing WPS hearings for example: in (a) the Parliament and its respective standing committees (on relevant to their mandate issues), and (b) at the Security Council and/or other relevant UN forums;
- The National Council on Gender Equality (NCGE) has to be involved, including in work to strengthen WPS monitoring mechanisms and by formally adding WPS NAP oversight to the agenda of the NCGE;
- Monitoring of implementation progress of the National WPS Action Plan (2018-20) should be done by Parliament, including through holding regular thematic Government Hours in the Parliament to hold relevant agencies accountable on their respective commitments on WPS). To this end;
  - Agency level actions plans need to be developed under the WPS NAP itself;
  - Budget allocations need to be made to underpin WPS NAP implementation;
  - Targets and performance indicators have to be developed to enable better monitoring;
- The Parliament should move forward the legislative initiative to enact a 50% gender quota in local councils. Specifically, amendments should be made to the local self-government and election legislation in 2019;
- WPS priorities should be properly informed by real data, but there is still a need for (a) more research to be funded on WPS issues and (b) the development of more innovative tools to track WPS issues, (e.g by mapping issues, actors, resources by territory, target groups, etc);
- Local level actions on WPS need to be initiated through the integration of the WPS agenda into local development plans, that are tailored to the different priorities of various communities. Such initiatives should be accompanied by educational activities to improve the understanding of the WPS agenda by local level actors;
- The information and awareness campaigns on specific needs of women and girls in the context of UNSCR 1325 should target a wider population through different channels. Information can be spread through various educational methods (through school curriculums) and media channels (TV programs, national, local and parliamentary radio, social media, printed materials, etc). An annual media plan could be jointly developed by key agencies, which would be coordinated, implemented and monitored jointly;
- There is a need for further donor support to Parliament to support institutionalizing oversight mechanisms to review WPS agenda, SDG-5 on gender equality and the SDGs more broadly.

6. Next steps

The draft Jogorku Kenesh WPS Road Map is still to be finalized, with support from UNDP and Innovative Solutions. The Chairperson of the Forum of Women MPs, Hon Rada Tumanbayeva, will then submit the final draft to the Forum for their approval after which it will be submitted to the plenary for endorsement.

Already, discussions with women MPs have highlighted the need to support the Forum of Women MPs and parliamentary committees with ongoing technical assistance to support implementation of the Jogorku Kenesh WPS Action Plan, as well as oversight of the Kyrgyzstan WPS NAP 2018-20. Reporting and monitoring processes relating to the WPS NAP need to be institutionalised, ideally through a process involving key parliamentary committees, who can call on the Ministry of Labor
and Social Development (gender machinery) and/or other relevant peacebuilding and security Ministries to inquire into whether and how they are effectively implementing the WPS agenda.

The most critical WPS issues and priorities should also be integrated into the Development Strategy of the Parliament, which is currently designed to guide activities up to 2021. In that regard, the UNDP PSP should be tasked with supporting the Jogorku Kenesh to institutionalise the WPS agenda into formal parliamentary structures, including the: Committee on Constitutional Legislation, State Structure, Judicial and Legal Issues; Committee on International Affairs, Defense and Security; Committee on Social Affairs, Education, Science, Culture and Health; and Committee on Budget and Finance. With regard to the last committee in particular, UNDP’s PSP could also help produce an analysis of the budget of the security sector and other state agencies implementing the UNSCR 1325 to inform the Budget and Finance Committees own oversight work of key Ministries.

The Regulations of the Jogorku Kenesh already require that all proposed laws are reviewed to assess their gender implications. Specifically, the Law on Normative Legal Acts 2009 guides the Jogorku Kenesh on how it reviews draft laws, with Article 20 specifically requiring that draft laws be subjected to an analysis to assess their impact on human rights protection, gender, anti-corruption, and ecological protection.7 UNDP’s PSP Team could work with the parliament to update these rules to more specifically include reference to the impact on peace and gender and could dedicate specific resources to building the capacity of the Jogorku Kenesh to undertake such an analysis for the benefit of MPs.