



Women Enabled, Inc.  
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Advocating for the Rights of All Women!

## U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security References to Women and Girls with disabilities

Overview: The U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (Plan) includes many references to women and girls with disabilities.<sup>1</sup> The Plan discusses the interaction between conflict and the incidence of disability and the particular risks that women with disabilities face in conflict situations.<sup>2</sup> The Plan also tasks the U.S. Government with promoting “equitable access” to medical, social, and legal services for women and girls with disabilities.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps more significantly, the Plan tasks the U.S. Government with supporting the participation of women with disabilities in peace-building efforts.<sup>4</sup>

Women Enabled, Inc.’s review of the Plan revealed specific references to women and girls with disabilities in various elements of the plans objectives and outcomes. Some opportunities for greater inclusion of women and girls with disabilities were missed, but hopefully, during the reporting and more detailed development and implementation of the Plan, these gaps will be addressed. Additionally, the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in the implementation of the Plan is required by the U.S. Agency for International Development’s 1997 USAID Disability Policy Paper, which requires the inclusion and active participation of people with disabilities in USAID-funded programs and activities.<sup>5</sup> With our expertise on the human rights of women and girls with disabilities and on conflict and post-conflict situations, Women Enabled, Inc. welcomes the opportunity to assist with Plan monitoring and implementation.

### Coverage of issues of concern to women and girls with disabilities in the Plan:

- Statement of National Policy

Third, in executing this policy, the United States will be guided by the principle of inclusion, seeking out the views and participation of a wide variety of stakeholders—women and girls, men and boys, and members of marginalized groups, including youth, ethnic, racial or religious minorities, persons with disabilities, displaced persons and indigenous peoples, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals, and people from all socioeconomic strata.

- The Case for Women in Peace and Security:

There are no references to women and girls with disabilities in this section.

- Protections for Women During and After Conflict:

There are no references to women and girls with disabilities in this section.

- Women’s Equal Access to the Means for Recovery:

Women’s perspectives are important for ensuring that relief and recovery assistance addresses the needs of the entire affected population. For example, women’s participation in camp management committees helps to ensure that displacement camps are safer and assistance programs are more accessible for vulnerable groups such as women, children, and persons with disabilities. Conflict also increases the incidence of disability, and

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<sup>1</sup> White House, *United States National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security*, PEACEWOMEN, 1, 9, 14, 17, 22 (Dec. 19, 2011), [http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/NationalActionPlans/us\\_nationalactionplan\\_2011.pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/NationalActionPlans/us_nationalactionplan_2011.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at 9–10 (“Conflict also increases the incidence of disability, and women with disabilities can face particular risks including social stigma and isolation, difficulty accessing humanitarian assistance, unmet health care needs, and higher rates of SGBV and other forms of violence during and after conflict.”).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 14 (“Support the participation and leadership roles of women from all backgrounds, including minorities and women with disabilities, in peace negotiations, donor conferences, security sector reform efforts, transitional justice and accountability processes, and other related decision-making forums including those led by the UN and other international and regional organizations, and including capacity building for such actors as female candidates, female members of government, women in the security sector, and women in civil society.”).

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Agency for International Development, Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination, Policy Guidance, USAID Policy Paper on disability, September 12, 1997, available at: [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PDABQ631.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDABQ631.pdf).

women with disabilities can face particular risks including social stigma and isolation, difficulty accessing humanitarian assistance, unmet health care needs, and higher rates of SGBV and other forms of violence during and after conflict.

- Developing the National Action Plan:

There are no references to women and girls with disabilities in this section.

- National Objectives and Action Framework:

#1 National Integration and Institutionalization:

There are no references to women and girls with disabilities in this section.

#2 Participation in Peace Processes and Decision-making:

Outcome 2.1:

More women are effectively engaged in peace negotiations, security initiatives, conflict prevention, peace-building--including formal and informal processes--and decision-making during all phases of conflict prevention and resolution, and transition.

Actions:

State, USUN:

Support the participation and leadership roles of women from all backgrounds, including minorities and women with disabilities, in peace negotiations, donor conferences, security sector reform efforts, transitional justice and accountability processes, and other related decision-making forums including those led by the UN and other international and regional organizations, and including capacity building for such actors as female candidates, female members of government, women in the security sector, and women in civil society.

#3 Protection from Violence:

The United States Government will strengthen its efforts to prevent—and protect women and children from—harm, exploitation, discrimination, and abuse, including sexual and gender-based violence and trafficking in persons, and to hold perpetrators accountable in conflict-affected environments.

Actions:

State, USAID, USUN:

Provide support for a range of appropriate services and tools to assist and empower vulnerable women and girls, including medical services, psychosocial services, and legal services, as well as opportunities for livelihood training, education, and rest and recreation (e.g. athletics, art, and play); promote equitable access to these services for women and girls with disabilities

#4 Conflict Prevention

The United States Government will promote women's roles in conflict prevention, improve conflict early-warning and response systems through the integration of gender perspectives, and invest in women and girls' health, education, and economic opportunity to create conditions for stable societies and lasting peace.

There are no references to women and girls with disabilities.

#5 Access to Relief and Recovery:

The United States Government will respond to the distinct needs of women and children in conflict-affected disasters and crises, including by providing safe, equitable access to humanitarian assistance.

Outcome 5.2:

Relief and recovery assistance includes enhanced measures to prevent and respond to SGBV in conflict and post-conflict environments.

Actions:

Provide support for survivors of conflict, torture, and sexual violence, to include persons with disabilities, their families, and communities, through direct services, including trauma-informed services and sexual and reproductive healthcare.

- Coordination, Implementation, Monitoring, and Reporting:

The goals set forth in this National Action Plan are the beginning, rather than the end, of effecting real and meaningful change. As directed by the Executive Order, within 150 days, State, DOD, and USAID will designate one or more officer or officers, as appropriate, as responsible for coordination and implementation, and will supplement this Plan by submitting to the Assistant to the President and National Security Advisor agency-specific Women, Peace, and Security implementation plans. These implementation plans will establish a full range of time-bound, measurable, and resourced actions State, DOD, and USAID will take to realize their commitments, and will include meaningful strategies for monitoring implementation and evaluating results.

The Plan enumerates some actions already taken and, with respect to women and girls with disabilities, the following are set forth in the Plan:

Investing in Conflict Prevention through Economic Empowerment, Health, and Education:

Education can also mitigate the effects of conflict and provide the basis for long term economic growth and stability. Out of 70 million primary school-aged children not in school, nearly 40 million live in countries affected by armed conflict. It is therefore critical to restore education sites, services and system-wide capacity for children and youth, particularly girls, in conflict-affected or insecure environments. We are working to increase equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments for 15 million learners, including those with disabilities, by 2015.

The U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security was launched in December 2011.<sup>6</sup>

Interestingly, in spite of these references to women with disabilities in the U.S. National Action Plan, women with disabilities were not “fully represented” in the U.S. Government’s formal consultations with civil society representatives.<sup>7</sup> While NGO representatives brought forward “relevant issues” regarding disabled women,<sup>8</sup> the U.S. National Action Plan would undoubtedly have been even more sensitive to the concerns of women with disabilities if they had been more deeply involved throughout the consultation process.

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<http://ssrn.com/author=1875099> and connect with me on LinkedIn at <http://www.linkedin.com/> under Stephanie Ortoleva, for information on human rights, women’s rights and the rights of women with disabilities internationally.

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/NationalActionPlans/us\\_nationalactionplan\\_2011.pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/NationalActionPlans/us_nationalactionplan_2011.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, *Report of the Civil Society Consultations on the Development of the United States National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (UN SCR 1325)*, 9 PEACEWOMEN, [http://wilpf.org/files/Report\\_of\\_Women\\_Peace\\_Security\\_Consults\\_\(2011\).pdf](http://wilpf.org/files/Report_of_Women_Peace_Security_Consults_(2011).pdf) (last visited Jan. 14, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*