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AUSTRALIAN COALITION

Towards a queer-inclusive WPS agenda in the Asia-Pacific region

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“All we want in our lives is peace and security.”

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Section 1.
Introduction

In October 2000, the UN Security Council adopted the landmark Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). SCR 1325 was the first to recognise the unique impact of armed conflict on women and to emphasise the critical role of women in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and post-conflict recovery, while also addressing the need to protect women from gender-based violence (GBV) in conflict settings.

The set of international policies, frameworks, and resolutions—starting with and expanding upon SCR 1325—that promote the inclusion and participation of women in peacebuilding, protect them in conflict and recovery settings, and address gender-based violence, are referred to as the **WPS architecture**. The **WPS agenda** refers to the ongoing global efforts and initiatives aimed at implementing these policies and resolutions, ensuring that women are actively involved in peace processes, their rights are protected in conflict, and gender perspectives are integrated into peace and security frameworks.

Almost 25 years on, WPS has become a globally significant framework shaping international norms on gender equality and peacebuilding. Efforts to localise the WPS agenda have emerged globally, including through National Action Plans (NAPs) and Regional Action Plans (RAPs).

However, there are growing calls to expand the concept of peace and security beyond the traditional focus on national security to a more comprehensive approach rooted in **human security**, or the security of the individual. After all, as this brief explores, peace can mean little to an individual if they experience constant fear, violence, and oppression in their everyday lives. This broader lens recognises that true security cannot be achieved solely through military or state-focused measures but must also address the lived realities of marginalised communities, including those who face structural violence and discrimination on a daily basis.

In addition to this shift, there are increasing demands for the WPS agenda to be significantly more inclusive. The current use of "women" and "gender" interchangeably throughout related policies, reports, and program frameworks, often fails to acknowledge the diverse experiences of lesbian, bisexual, and queer (LBQ) women, as well as gender-diverse people.

As well as excluding LBQ women and gender-diverse people, this narrow, binary conceptualisation of gender also overlooks the critical contributions and unique perspectives of organisations and networks that advocate for the rights, needs, and strengths of people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). These voices, which are especially important in conflict-affected and other humanitarian settings, are often silenced or marginalised, further perpetuating a cycle of exclusion and invisibility.[1]

The WPS framework is centred on four key pillars:

- **Participation**
- **Prevention**
- **Protection**
- **Relief and recovery**

Its current aims include:

- The promotion of inclusive **participation** of women in decision-making processes, including in community peacebuilding initiatives and higher-level peace processes.
- Enhancing strategies for **preventing** conflict and GBV, including prosecuting violators of international law, strengthening women's legal rights, and reducing fragility.
- Safeguarding women and girls to **protect** them from sexual and gender-based violence, particularly in emergency and humanitarian situations, such as within refugee camps.
- Ensuring inclusive **relief and recovery** plans, which address the needs of women affected by armed conflict, disaster, and insecurity.

1 Hagen J. & Ritholz, S. 'Call for input to a thematic report: on the dynamics between sexual orientation, gender identity, and armed conflict,' 22 April 2022, OHCHR, online: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/sexualorientation/cfi-report-ga77/others/2022-11-10/QueesUniversity.pdf.

1.1 Research objectives

At its heart, this study seeks to better understand what peace and security mean to SOGIESC-diverse communities across the Asia-Pacific region. This includes exploring the unique challenges they face, particularly in humanitarian and conflict settings, and how these intersect with and compound the everyday violence and discrimination that queer people experience based on their SOGIESC.

The study also aims to investigate how local LGBTIQ+ communities and civil society organisations (CSOs) might wish to engage with the WPS agenda, and to identify key priorities for future action. A key goal is to identify how the Australian government can advance the WPS agenda through a more inclusive lens, whether through increased and targeted funding, greater access to decision-making spaces or knowledge-sharing initiatives. A set of recommendations is thus included in Section 6.

1.2 Regional context

The Asia-Pacific region is characterised by significant geopolitical and cultural diversity, with a broad range of conflict dynamics from ongoing armed conflicts and post-conflict recovery efforts to more localised instances of violence, humanitarian crises, and displacement. As a region susceptible to both disasters and socio-political instability, the peace and security landscape is highly complex.

As such, the implementation of the WPS Agenda has seen varying degrees of progress. Some countries, like Indonesia, the Philippines, Timor-Leste and Vietnam, have adopted National Action Plans (NAPs) aimed at localising the global WPS framework. Some of these show promise toward deeper SOGIESC inclusion, for instance the Philippines' 2023-33 NAP explicitly refers to "women in all their diversity."[2] However, most NAPs make no mention of SOGIESC considerations, potentially contributing to the continued marginalisation of LGBTIQ+ people in WPS efforts and decision-making processes.

At the regional level, an ASEAN-wide Regional Action Plan was launched in 2022, supported by comprehensive implementation programs funded by the United Kingdom, Canadian and South Korean governments.[3] This funding, as well as that from the Australian government through the DFAT ASEAN-Australia Partnership, prioritises localised WPS implementation and creates opportunities for civil society pathways at both national and regional levels.[4] Despite being developed after more than two decades of advocacy and programming work following SCR 1325, the recent ASEAN RAP fails to include SOGIESC considerations. A report on "insights and lessons learned" in the Making of the ASEAN RAP notes that civil society consultations to inform the RAP were conducted as follows:

> **"To ensure broad-based representation and inputs from civil society, UN Women conducted a mapping exercise of existing CSOs, including women's organisations working at national and regional levels on WPS. [This] was then used... to reach out to CSOs and to engage them in consultations and dialogue about the RPA WPS"[5]**

It is possible that consulting and engaging only those women's rights organisations already active in the WPS space may have contributed to the continued lack of representation by LGBTIQ+ CSOs in the development of the RAP, and the lack of SOGIESC-inclusive content in the plan itself.

In the Pacific, a Regional Action Plan for Women, Peace, and Security was developed more than a decade ago by Pacific Island CSOs, the UN, the Pacific Islands Forum, and the Secretariat of

2 Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (2022) Philippine National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, online: https://wps.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Philippines_NAPWPS-2023-2033.pdf.

3 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (2022) Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security, online: https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/32-ASEAN-Regional-Plan-of-Action-on-Women-Peace-and-Security.pdf.

4 See: The "Empowering Women for Sustainable Peace: Preventing Violence and Promoting Social Cohesion in ASEAN" project https://wps.asean.org/about/.

5 UN Women (2023) The Making of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security: Insights and Lessons Learned, online: https://wps.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Making-of-RPA-WPS_20230620.pdf.

the Pacific Community.[6] While this RAP has not been updated or renewed, several Pacific Island countries have initiated national-level programs that build on this earlier work.[7] The original RAP lacks explicit references to LGBTIQ+ inclusion, making the early discussions on a new RAP an important advocacy opportunity to push for deeper inclusion of diverse SOGIESC.

Compounding the lack of queer representation within mainstream peacebuilding and conflict prevention initiatives, the Asia-Pacific region continues to grapple with deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and restrictive legal frameworks, particularly around issues of gender and sexuality. Many of these structures are direct legacies of colonial history and its impacts, for instance in India and Sri Lanka. In some countries, including Bangladesh and Brunei, legislative frameworks continue to effectively criminalise or marginalise LGBTIQ+ people, creating an environment of structural exclusion severely limiting the peace and security enjoyed by SOGIESC-diverse communities. These legal and societal barriers exacerbate the already high levels of insecurity faced by SOGIESC-diverse populations, with their pre-existing marginalisation and vulnerability escalating significantly during times of conflict or crisis.

LGBTIQ+ organisation Outright International emphasises that globally, ***"threats against LGBTQI+ people are multiplying... [with] some groups resorting to violence in their efforts to cement a compulsory cisgender, heterosexual norm. These threats inject urgency into the imperative to address conflict related gender-based violence against LGBTQI+ people."***[8] Alongside these escalating threats, shrinking civic space and increased crackdowns on independent human rights organisations and activists across the region have created a more hostile operating environment, making it increasingly difficult to advance the peace and security needs of LGBTIQ+ communities.

1.3 Australia's WPS positioning

Australia seeks to be a 'committed global champion' of the WPS Agenda and, through its second, 2021-2031 NAP, has a long-term, whole-of government strategy that sets out how Australia plans to realise gender equality and the rights of women and girls in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.[9] The NAP ***"recognises that women and girls are not a homogenous group, and neither are men and boys," and explicitly takes an intersectional approach by "promot[ing] the human rights and dignity of all — women and girls, men and boys, and people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities — and tailors approaches to meet their needs."***[10] However, the extent to which this approach is being effectively implemented and whether LGBTIQ+ persons are being meaningfully engaged under the second NAP remains unclear, in part due to the lack of available reporting on its progress thus far.

The NAP has faced criticism for its outward-looking approach, especially in light of Australia's significant domestic challenges in protecting women's rights to peace and security, particularly those of First Nations women. This disconnect between Australia's international leadership on the WPS Agenda and its internal struggles to address violence and discrimination against marginalised groups remains a point of contention. Although the experiences of LBQ women in Australia were not the focus of this study, they represent an important area for further research and policy attention. This is especially relevant for ensuring the protection and support of SOGIESC-diverse diaspora and refugee communities who resettle in Australia, including those having faced conflict-related displacement, or persecution in their countries of origin. Strengthening the NAP's domestic application, particularly in addressing the needs of these vulnerable groups, will be essential to aligning Australia's WPS commitments with the lived realities within its own borders.

6 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (2012) Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012 – 2015), online: https://wpsfocalpointsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/RAP-2012-2015-Pacific.pdf.

7 Wrathall, H. & Kopel, E. 'Women, Peace, and Security in the Pacific,' 1 September 2023, The Diplomat, online: https://thediplomat.com/2023/09/women-peace-and-security-in-the-pacific/.

8 Outright International, 'LGBTQ Lives in Conflict and Crisis: A Queer Agenda for Peace, Security, and Accountability,' February 2023, p. 3, online: https://outrightinternational.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/LGBTQLivesConflictCrisis_0.pdf.

9 Asia-Pacific Development, Diplomacy and Defence Dialogue (2023) 'What does it look like for Australia to be a Strategic Partner on Women, Peace and Security with the Pacific?' online: https://asiapacific4d.com/idea/partner-on-pacific-wps/.

10 Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2021) Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2021-2031, online: https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/australia-national-action-plan-women-peace-security.pdf.

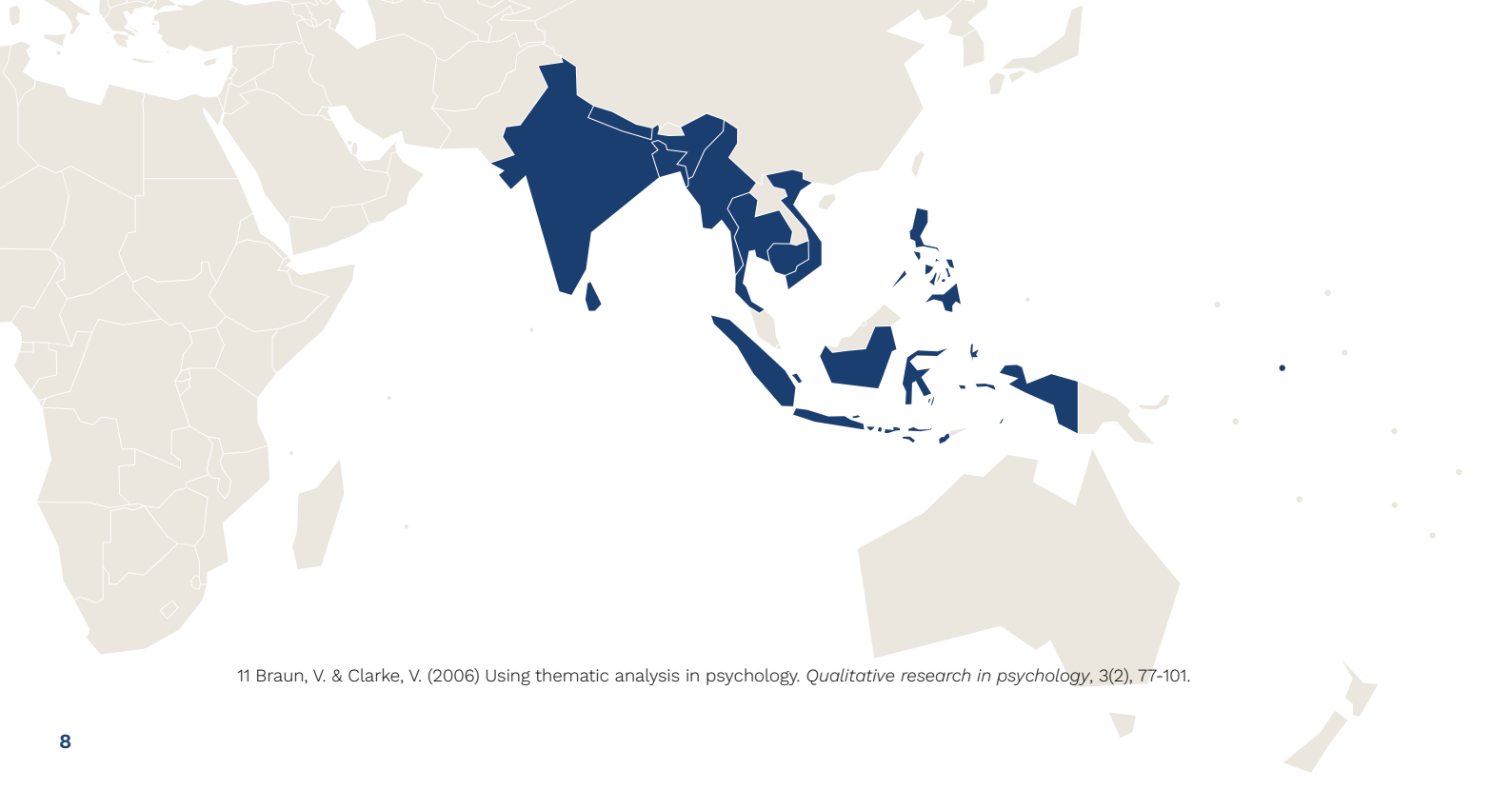
1.4 Methodology

This study involved interviews with 19 representatives of local and regional LBQ, LGBTIQ+ and Transgender CSOs from across the Asia-Pacific region, as well as one leading academic expert on queering the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda. In addition to these key informant interviews (KIIs), a desk-based review of relevant international, regional, and domestic policies, as well as recent academic and grey literature, was conducted.

The KIIs were semi-structured to allow for in-depth exploration of experiences and insights. Following the interviews, thematic analysis was conducted in line with Braun and Clarke's approach, identifying key themes across the data.[11] Wherever possible given the limited length of the brief, quotes are included in full throughout to amplify the voices of those with lived experiences, ensuring their rich and insightful testimonies remain at the forefront of the analysis.

This study is not exhaustive in its geographic scope or in covering all possible lines of inquiry; rather, it presents a starting point for exploring how a more SOGIESC-responsive WPS agenda can be realised, by identifying key areas for further exploration and action. We hope this will lead to more in-depth research on these issues, and to deeper engagement with the challenges faced by SOGIESC-diverse organisations in relation to understanding and improving queer experiences of peace and security.

Key informants by region	Number of organisations/ individuals consulted
Bangladesh	1
Cambodia	1
Fiji	1
India	1
India: Manipur Region	1
Indonesia	3
Myanmar	1
Nepal	2
Philippines	1
Sri Lanka	1
Thailand	1
Vietnam	2
ASEAN-wide Regional Network	1
Asia-wide Regional Network	1
Pacific-wide Regional Network	1
Academic expert on queering WPS	1
LBQ activists and LBQ-led or -focused organisations	9
Transgender rights organisations or activists	4
LGBTIQ+ / SOGIESC organisations	7



11 Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

Section 2. Current engagement with the WPS agenda

2.1 Barriers to inclusion

Interviews with participants indicated that formal engagement with the WPS agenda among SOGIESC-diverse organisations across the region remains limited. As one advised, ***"Not many LGBTIQ activists have been engaged in peace and security work and the agenda before, so we're still new to concepts of peacebuilding"*** (Asia Regional).

In many instances, local SOGIESC organisations have not been invited into relevant spaces to consult on issues related to peace and security: ***"How the term 'women' is used and understood by implementing agencies affects WPS programme design. It's not really inclusive; they don't really include LBQ or transgender women... in the work and the consultation process. And nor do they really involve the organisations that work for them" (Vietnam). The same participant noted that "We weren't consulted in the creation of our new [NAP] on WPS; we just read about it in the news."***

In cases where local LGBTIQ+ organisations have been approached to participate in consultations or forums, some have refrained from fully engaging because of a sense that WPS is not directly within their wheelhouse; increasingly limited resources mean that local LGBTIQ+ CSOs must prioritise areas of work that are most in alignment with their existing strategies, programme frameworks, and organisational mandates. This idea is again reinforced by the common perception that the WPS agenda is focused on heterosexual, cisgender women, thereby excluding SOGIESC-diverse experiences and expertise:

> **"In our own work, we're not talking about LBQ women and their safety and security at the regional or international level. At those levels,** *we really see WPS as led by cis women*, **rather than 'women in all their diversity'". Fiji**

Some participants explained that by channelling policy suggestions through feminist allies, some recognition of SOGIESC-diverse women's needs is slowly making its way into the agenda: ***"The feminist CSOs were leading. So we were at least able to feed in through [them] to make sure the most pressing needs for SOGIE-diverse people following a conflict were noted. But we never got the opportunity to feed [directly] into the NAP"*** (Nepal).

Some participants expressed that this type of representation often leads to superficial mentions of LGBTIQ+ people that fail to capture the full complexity of their peace and security challenges. In some contexts, this gap is attributed to the well-intentioned but sometimes overestimated understanding of women's rights organisations (WROs) when it comes to LGBTIQ issues:

"Sometimes the women's rights actors think they are being inclusive, but actually, they don't have the expertise to make policies inclusive in a meaningful way. They say, 'Oh, we put [SOGIE] in the policy!' That's not enough. Even among ourselves, we have such an enormous diversity and range of views and it's not easy to pin it down, so how can they manage to do so without us?" (Myanmar).

Some viewed the assumption that mainstream WROs are able to speak to SOGIESC-diverse issues as grounded in privilege, particularly in contexts where ***"cisgender women hold certain forms of social privilege, in that their mere existence is accepted"*** (Manipur). Another participant highlighted this dynamic while emphasising the need for SOGIESC rights actors to be acknowledged and engaged as independent voices on all gender issues, including WPS:

"For the queer movement, in India, the feminist movements have been torch-bearers for us. And a lot of the barriers have been broken for us through their work. But we now need to recognise the diverse marginalities that exist in relation to gender" (India).

Some respondents reported a reluctance among local women's rights actors to integrate SOGIESC issues, out of a lack of understanding or fear of backlash, especially in grassroots peacebuilding efforts:

"Often, it's a religious conflict, where religion is weaponised for political objectives. And SOGIE is used as a tool towards these ends. So women in Bangsamoro, the local community champions, also do not wish to touch SOGIE. So SOGIE-diverse women are doubly victimised" (ASEAN Regional).

There has been more marked progress at the national level in the Philippines, with LBQ networks feeding into the 2023 NAP alongside other LGBTIQ+ organisations, and a sense that ***"feminist organisations are now getting more meaningfully inclusive of SOGIE issues"*** (Philippines).

While challenges to meaningful inclusion persist, there is broadly some appetite within LBQ networks to engage with the WPS agenda in the future. This engagement, however, comes with certain conditions, as explored in Section 5 of this brief. These include greater recognition of the holistic human security strategies that LGBTIQ+ groups are already implementing to protect and promote the peace and security of their communities.

Several participants, including from Bangladesh and India, emphasised that a more meaningful inclusion of queer perspectives in WPS work would significantly enhance the agenda. One noted that ***"queer people have a lot to add to conversations on peace and security – about how we survive on a daily basis, when we are limited by constant insecurity and conflict,"*** and that there are ***"tremendous advantages"*** in WROs and LGBTIQ+ organisations working together through a ***"united front"*** (India).

The mutual benefits of SOGIESC inclusion within the WPS agenda for both LGBTIQ and WROs were also highlighted by a participant from a Pacific regional network:

> **"SOGIESC-diverse people are being left out of peace-related processes, but there's definitely an interest on our side to be more involved. We have a lot to share in terms of our experiences – of violence, insecurity, discrimination, exclusion, marginalisation, ostracisation.**
>
> **Given that** *all we want in our lives is peace and security*, **we should be more visible in that space".** **Pacific Regional**

2.2 Towards a Gender, Peace, and Security (GPS) Agenda

During the interviews, participants widely agreed that transitioning from the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) framework to a more inclusive Gender, Peace, and Security (GPS) framework would be a positive step. They emphasised that using "gender" as a framework would more fully represent the diversity of women, as well as transmasculine, non-binary, and gender-fluid individuals.

"We can no longer focus on binary conceptualisations. We can't actualise being inclusive unless we shift this language. We see them [WROs] trying to improve, but we shouldn't assume that the [WPS] framework is automatically inclusive just because it says 'women'. The language leaves behind trans people from the outset" (Cambodia).

Some agreed that despite well-intentioned efforts to use "women" inclusively, the term often reverts to binary and heteronormative interpretations in practice. One participant from Nepal highlighted the importance of clear language in relation to advocacy with policy makers:

"Our policy makers don't know about women in all their diversity. They think it means female-assigned at birth women only. If we say only 'Women,' they will just stick with that and go forward with that. Even the feminist organisations don't unpack and understand the diverse nature of what it means to be women. They also totally leave out LBQ needs based on sexual orientation... If we keep it as 'women' it should at least be 'women in all their diversity'" (Nepal).

Participants also noted that as well as including more people within its remit, broadening the scope of the agenda to encompass GPS would allow for more holistic analyses of gender considerations:

"GPS expands the concept of WPS in a way that allows for a broader and more inclusive analysis of peace and security issues, recognising that these issues affect people across the gender and sexuality spectrum. It also creates space to discuss how gender constructs of toxic masculinities and prescribed social roles influence peace and security" (Indonesia).

One participant living in an active conflict zone in India highlighted why this normative shift towards greater inclusion is so important: ***"When people talk about peace, it's always for the benefit of cisgender people. Transgender rights should be included in parallel, as the issues we face in conflicts are often the same – but more severe"*** (Manipur).

While there was strong support for shifting to GPS language, participants—including those from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Myanmar—stressed that this change must be accompanied by concrete, practical efforts to address the specific challenges faced by SOGIE-diverse people in peace and security contexts.

> **"GPS would be better. But while 'women' is too limiting, it's not the term that's the problem – it's that the implementation leaves out LBQ women and LGBTQ people generally. We've been trying to collaborate with [WROs, but] they still don't understand 'it's nothing about us without us.' We can change the language - but it's about meaningful, not tokenistic inclusion. So** *'GPS' isn't necessarily that helpful without a more expansive approach*". **Myanmar**

Section 3. Challenges faced in the region

3.1 Conflict: Targeted vulnerability and exclusion from peace processes

The experiences of SOGIESC-diverse in conflict-affected areas across the Asia-Pacific region are often marked by heightened vulnerability and marginalisation. This vulnerability arises not only from the general insecurities associated with conflict, but also from targeted discrimination and violence. Participants from various active and post-conflict contxts such as Manipur, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Nepal, and Thailand detailed how SOGIESC-diverse individuals are subjected to direct targeting during times of unrest, and face exclusion from peace processes.

In Manipur, the ongoing conflict exacerbates pre-existing discrimination faced by gender-diverse people, limiting their physical mobility as well as their access to resources and spaces for community-building work. Similar issues can be seen in the Philippines, where SOGIESC-diverse women living in conflict-affected areas reportedly face heightened stigma and violence:

"[There have been] documented murders of SOGIE-diverse people in the conflict areas, being burnt to death by the community. It's not so much directly a result of the conflict but it's related to impunity and the nature of religious interpretation in the South" (Philippines).

In Thailand, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and elsewhere, participants also observed how SOGIESC is often weaponised for political objectives by parties in conflict, creating double-layered victimisation for LBQ and trans women. Ethnic and religious minorities face additional security threats:

"We face many challenges, particularly in conflict areas where LGBTIQ+ people live in very threatening situations without protection from society or the state. Access to public services is denied, especially for trans women in Aceh... In Papua, when conflict escalates, LGBTIQ individuals cannot access safe spaces" (Indonesia).

Myanmar's ongoing conflict has also exacerbated the vulnerabilities faced by SOGIESC-diverse communities. A participant highlighted that many activists, especially those with diverse SOGIESC, face increased surveillance and threats:

> **"For us, security comes first. Especially in the queer community. You can be arrested at any time. You can be disappeared at any time.** *The country is not safe for any civilians who are LGBTQ.* **You can vanish while going to the shops. Many fellow activists escaped, but many are stuck. We're worried about them every day".** **Myanmar**

The intensified environment means that SOGIESC-diverse people in Myanmar are not only exposed to societal discrimination but also find themselves directly targeted amidst the conflict. Despite this, Myanmar's queer youth movement remains at the forefront of pro-democracy activism. When asked why this is the case, given their heightened security concerns, the same participant advised that:

"Before the coup, young queer people were starting to get so many improvements in their lives... They thought their problems were in the past, and they had bright futures ahead... the coup meant they lost everything. So of course they need to be part of the fight. The young people want their own rights, and they have energy" (Myanmar).

Even in post-conflict zones, such as Sri Lanka, a participant noted that activists often tread a ***"tightrope"***, needing to be cautious in their work as they navigate a volatile operating landscape: ***"While we've had a lot of support from feminist networks and groups, it's important to note that what we do is much harder than a women's rights organisation because we have security issues on a daily basis while we do our work"*** (Sri Lanka).

Participant narratives illustrate that while SOGIESC-diverse individuals face direct risks in conflict and post-conflict settings, they are simultaneously excluded from peace processes and transitional justice efforts. For instance, in Nepal, a lack of visibility and formal acknowledgment of SOGIESC-diverse experiences and needs persists, with peace processes engaging only ***"mainstream women and men: No representation of persons with disabilities, no Dalit, no LBQ."*** When asked a follow up question as to whether it's important that LBQ women are represented in peacebuilding spaces, the participant answered ***"Yes, because our issues are cross-cutting issues. Marginalised groups shouldn't be left out of peace processes."*** (Nepal).

This issue was also raised in the Philippines, where the recognition of LGBTIQ+ experiences as legitimate aspects of conflict-resolution work also remains limited, requiring shifts in attitude as well as practice:

"In terms of integration in peacebuilding efforts, SOGIE is seen as a luxury, as an add-on. They say, 'People in the area are getting killed,' or 'people are in poverty, we don't have time to talk about SOGIE'" (Philippines).

> **During peacetime, we're already facing marginalisation... And** *when disasters and conflicts strike, it hits us harder and takes us longer to return to normalcy*. **We avoid going to... disaster relief centres, because we worry about our physical and emotional security being violated.**
>
> **We turn to our own community instead; our allies and networks are our first stop. Then we explore CSO service providers. Only if that failed would we approach the government". Pacific Regional**

3.2 Post-disaster: Lack of inclusion, exacerbated marginalisation

Across the region, participants from countries such as Nepal, Fiji, and the Philippines expressed concerns about how the specific needs of SOGIESC-diverse people, and LBQ women in particular, are neglected during disaster response and recovery.

In Nepal, following the massive earthquake in 2015, LGBTQI+ individuals faced severe challenges. A participant shared how, initially, trans people were barred from using public toilets due to assumptions about their identities and perceived association with sex work. However, over time, community-led efforts, such as providing meals through community kitchens, began to break down these barriers, highlighting the importance of local LGBTIQ+ involvement in disaster response. The same participant highlighted how a lack of specific consideration for LGBTQI+ needs—such as access to healthcare or tailored shelter provisions—leaves communities without critical support during and after disasters:

"During lockdown, and in disasters like landslides or floods, LBQ women and trans men are always excluded. In the pandemic, emergency medicine kits didn't include hormones... trans men shared that it was really difficult to buy sanitary pads – people would stare at them and discriminate against them" (Nepal).

A lack of inclusive safety measures in relief centres was also noted in Fiji, where trans women, in particular, avoid shelters due to experiences of sexual harassment such as being asked for sexual favours in exchange for access to resources: ***"when they refuse, they don't get rations"*** (Fiji).

In the Philippines, it was reported that policies following disasters may appear neutral on paper, yet in practice, support is often denied to SOGIESC-diverse people at the local level: ***"LGBT Families aren't getting the same kinds of support following disasters... in practice, it's local discretion that determines where the aid goes"*** (Philippines).

The importance of engaging with local CSOs is crucial in ensuring the inclusion of SOGIE-diverse communities in disaster response efforts, as demonstrated during the pandemic in Vietnam:

> **[During] Covid, we ran emergency support work because the government wasn't able to reach LGBTIQ people. The trans community were especially afraid to go to locations set up by the government or even by other CSOs, in case they faced discrimination... That's why [we need]** *proper funding for the organisations directly representing marginalised groups*. **There's a level of trust and expertise that only certain groups have, as a result of working with people over time and truly understanding their issues".** **Vietnam**

Negative societal attitudes towards SOGIESC-diverse people lead to their overt exclusion in post-disaster settings, heightening the risk of violence and discrimination against them during already vulnerable times. One participant therefore emphasised the need for a shift in attitudes among aid providers to help combat stereotypes:

"During emergencies... remember that we can also contribute and volunteer. Consider and acknowledge our expertise – use us when something happens! Don't limit your view of us to only 'recipients' or 'beneficiaries.' We can also contribute. This is important" (Nepal).

3.3 Climate

Participants from various regions highlighted how climate change exacerbates vulnerabilities for SOGIE-diverse individuals, as it often interacts with existing socio-economic inequalities and discrimination. In many contexts, queer communities face compounded impacts during climate-induced disasters, which can drive migration and force populations into precarious situations.

In Indonesia, participants noted that climate change presents unique challenges for trans women, who often work as street performers and are exposed to extreme weather conditions and air pollution without access to healthcare or social protection (Indonesia). Participants from the Pacific region expressed concern about how climate-induced migration is set to affect access to resources and rights, particularly for queer women couples within patriarchal land tenure systems:

> **We will end up being the ones left behind, with our rights not prioritised.** *Climate-induced migration will be extremely difficult*. **How would these mammoth operations to relocate populations work? What will land tenure and distribution look like... including for female couples? There needs to be research on this now, because these threats will emerge as a result of climate change and relocation".** **Pacific Regional**

In Cambodia, climate change has already begun impacting livelihoods, with extreme weather driving migration and heightening tensions within communities (KI2 Cambodia). Similarly, in Vietnam, the southern provinces near the sea are facing significant climate threats as rising sea levels and sinking land disrupt livelihoods, leading to mass migration and increased vulnerabilities for LGBTIQ+ individuals (KI15 Vietnam). The intersection of climate change and SOGIE-diverse vulnerabilities emphasises the urgency for a more inclusive approach to addressing climate resilience and disaster risk reduction (DRR).

3.4 Violence in the home and community

The home, often conceptualised as a place of safety and protection, paradoxically represents the first layer of violence for many SOGIESC-diverse individuals. As one participant from the Philippines noted, ***"Whenever LBT women are accepted in the home, they tend to be more successful in life. And so, the first level of defence is the home. But then again, usually, the first layer of violence also comes from within the home"*** (Philippines). This violence can manifest as verbal, emotional, and physical abuse and, in extreme cases, may include incidents of ***"corrective"*** rape, parental rejection, or being forced to leave the family home. These actions create a lasting impact on the individual's mental health, economic stability, and overall sense of security.

In many places, violence within the home extends into the broader community. For example, family members may allow others in the community to harm SOGIESC-diverse individuals, often as a form of punishment for non-conformity to gender and sexuality norms. This type of community-sanctioned violence reinforces stigma and marginalisation, leaving LBT women and gender-diverse people particularly vulnerable.

In Bangladesh, the pressures related to community-sanctioned violence are only increasing: ***"People are gradually going underground. Many queer folks are looking for shelter - but their parents won't house them. For LBQ women, forced marriage is a huge pressure. And there have been killings by family members"*** (Bangladesh).

In many cases, legal and social structures continue to perpetuate cycles of violence. The lack of supportive structures within the home and the community pushes many SOGIESC-diverse individuals to live in constant fear and insecurity. In the Pacific region, for instance, one participant shared, ***"There is a lack of legal protection, in a region where some countries still criminalise homosexuality. [This] contributes to a climate of impunity. The experiences of SOGIE-diverse people trying to access justice is very bad, especially for trans women... some have faced abuse and rape at the hands of law enforcement"*** (Pacific Regional). These individuals often find themselves left to navigate dual burdens of violence in both their private and public lives.

3.5 Rise of extremism and online violence

Linked with the rise in community-sanctioned violence, extremist ideologies have increasingly targeted SOGIESC-diverse communities across the region, posing threats both online and offline. These threats usually manifest as a combination of hate speech, cyberbullying, and organised campaigns of harassment. For many participants, such extremism not only threatens their personal safety but also undermines their broader sense of peace and security.

In Thailand, online platforms have become rife with hate speech directed towards transgender and non-binary individuals, despite recent progress on marriage equality. One participant noted that ***"In Thailand, when you go online you see a lot of online hate. Against trans, intersex and LGBTIQ. These kinds of comments send a message, that 'hey, our society is not safe for you.'"*** (Asia regional). The rise in homophobic and transphobic cyberbullying has reportedly led to a mental health crisis among the LGBTIQ+ community in many places, highlighting the urgent need for protections: ***"Cyberbullying is a huge problem in the region, and there is no realistic recourse to remedy"*** (Pacific Regional).

In Indonesia, participants described personal experiences of their organisation being targeted in a coordinated online attack by extremist religious groups, which led to the targeted harassment of LBQ women. Participants reported being forced to seek assistance from digital rights groups for support, as responses from tech companies like Meta and X were ineffective. As one participant noted, ***"LBQ women were more targeted... doxxing their history and identities... [using] images to create memes in order to shame them"*** (Indonesia). This online violence has at times extended beyond the digital realm to real-world anti-LGBTIQ protests in public spaces.

Similarly, in Bangladesh, the rise of religious extremism has led to a worsening environment for SOGIESC-diverse communities, where ***"things are becoming worse and worse day by day, and peace for the SOGIESC community is almost non-existent"*** (Bangladesh). A participant described how organised groups disseminate anti-LGBTIQ narratives through both online

channels and community networks, resulting in heightened levels of hate speech. This online violence is again compounded by a lack of response from social media platforms, leaving the community vulnerable to both physical and emotional threats: ***"They are well-organised, well-funded, and they have huge groups to disseminate narratives against SOGIESC both online and offline."***

Extremism and online violence have a distinct impact on peace and security, as they cultivate a climate of fear and mistrust. In Vietnam, a participant recalled how online harassment escalated during elections in 2021, when an openly LGBTIQ candidate faced orchestrated attacks on his personal life. This was felt throughout the community, with the same participant reflecting, ***"It felt like we were all being attacked, not just him"*** (Vietnam).

For many SOGIESC-diverse people, online spaces have become both a site of community and potential harm. The growing threat of extremism and online violence exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, particularly for those already facing discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation.

3.6 Shrinking civic space

Across the region, LGBTIQ CSOs are reportedly experiencing a paradoxical opening and closing of space for advocacy and activism. In many contexts, including Cambodia, there has been increased visibility and collaboration between governments and SOGIESC rights actors, yet these gains are often accompanied by restrictive policies and heightened scrutiny on NGO activities.

A participant from Nepal described the dual reality faced by their organisation: ***"On one hand, there is increasing collaboration in relation to SOGIESC, but on the other hand, there are increasing limitations on mobilisation and expression"*** (Nepal). She explained how government regulations, such as tightening controls over NGO funding and increased monitoring, create a shrinking space for activism and place limitations on fundamental freedoms such as expression.

> **"This regime has taken [away] a lot of our rights around free expression and assembly.** *Queer groups have been talking about seeing a kind of 'quid pro quo'*: **'Okay, we'll give some more rights here for SOGIESC, but we want you to get off our backs about these other human rights issues. So we win here, but lose there on the other hand'".** **India**

In Vietnam, although there was a noticeable ***"blossoming"*** for civil society work in the early 2010s, recent years have reportedly seen a reduction in space, with one participant explaining that ***"restrictions have become much more hostile. They've been arresting activists, environmentalists, journalists... so it keeps getting harder and harder every year"*** (Vietnam). In the Philippines, too, it was reported that ***"there is a shrinking space... playing out, and affecting LGBT organisations"*** (Philippines).

Similar observations were also shared by participants from India, where ***"civil society is in a very shaky position"***, and there is increased difficulty in holding the government accountable for human rights violations (India):

These experiences reflect a broader regional pattern: despite an overall sense of progress towards greater SOGIESC inclusion in many contexts, the overall ability of LGBTIQ CSOs to advocate for their rights and contribute to peace and security is increasingly constrained by shrinking civic space and government-imposed restrictions on NGO activities. Restrictions on funding, increased monitoring, and decreasing avenues for expression challenge the progress that has been made towards SOGIESC inclusion. Such conditions ultimately limit the capacity of civil society actors to hold governments accountable and contribute to a holistic peace and security agenda.

Section 4. Queer understandings of peace and (human) security

The queer understandings of peace and security across the Asia-Pacific region that are explored throughout this section promote a shift from traditional, state-centred approaches to more inclusive, people-centred perspectives.

> **In a nutshell,** *what peace and security means for our constituencies is freedom from discrimination*, **which usually takes the form of sexual violence, deprivation of employment, bullying, and physical violence with impunity – in schools, on the streets, and from within families. The impunity is then** *exacerbated by conflict*, **where there's even less rule of law".** **Philippines**

4.1 'Peace' as holistic and intersectional

For many SOGIESC-diverse activists, peace is more than the absence of conflict; it is a holistic and intersectional concept that extends to everyday life experiences, social justice, and the right to live authentically without fear of violence, discrimination, or marginalisation.

The notion of ***"mental peace"*** emerged as a recurrent theme, with respondents highlighting how ongoing societal exclusion, discrimination, and violence undermine their sense of security and peace: ***"We're constantly fighting in our daily lives... we need to be able to improve our inner, mental peace"*** (Asia Regional). This notion was supported by a participant in India who highlighted the ***"direct connection between violence, discrimination and mental health"***, adding ***"it's a mountain of pain all around us"*** (India). This need for mental peace reflects how queer individuals experience multi-layered pressures in societies where their identities are often stigmatised or hidden.

One interviewee from Indonesia gave a detailed personal account of what peace means to her in her own life, stating:

"As an LBQ Muslim woman in Indonesia, peace means something very significant and profound. It doesn't just mean being free from physical conflict and violence. Peace means having the right to be myself and express my true identity without anxiety. True peace also includes access to employment, social protection, and to feel safe in all aspects of my life. Peace is freedom from discrimination, where I don't have to be afraid to be me" (Indonesia).

Such perspectives illustrate that for queer communities, peace is about living openly and authentically without the threat of harm or exclusion in any part of their lives, whether at home, in their communities, or during periods of conflict and disasters. Indeed, even for participants living in active conflict settings, such a broad conceptualisation of peace is evident:

"Our lives are under threat. How can I talk about transgender rights separately from my experiences of this conflict? These are interconnected. What about my own need for self-determination? What is freedom for women, when men control the system and wield absolute power in their projects of masculinity" (Manipur).

A participant from Fiji spoke of the mental toll that results from social exclusion and discrimination in disaster response settings, while one respondent from Sri Lanka highlighted how punitive legal frameworks continue to prevent the realisation of peace for queer people: "***There is no 'peace' for us until the laws that criminalise us are repealed. That's why we focus on educating, sensitising, and gaining legislative change"*** (Sri Lanka). One participant from India explained that even when laws are passed to protect people with diverse SOGIESC, they often fail to reach marginalised communities and conflict-affected areas: ***"Legislation that is supposed to protect [transgender people] isn't being implemented in our region. We're under military occupation, and the legal protections that exist elsewhere don't apply to us"*** (Manipur).

Activists also highlighted that peace must be understood through an intersectional lens to address the full range of issues facing queer communities. A participant from India stressed that beyond SOGIESC, ***"There are so many intersections – class, caste, geographical location"*** (India). Another respondent emphasised the importance of understanding the context-specific experiences of particular groups within the LGBTIQ community:

"Different groups have different needs and issues. For example, Toms (trans masc people) from the [conflict affected] deep South don't feel safe to be who they are, even in their own houses. Trans feminine people also face violence in the South, but they have more social support. Even if they're also rejected by their families, they're at least within robust networks. We have to recognise these differences" (Asia Regional).

The same participant highlighted the importance of integrating psychosocial support into peacebuilding activities with SOGIESC-diverse people in conflict settings, with a focus on supporting mental peace: ***"When we work in these conflict areas with these groups, we have to be so conscious that a lot of people have trauma. We need to think about how we manage our spaces to accommodate that trauma and the risks of retraumatisation"*** (Asia Regional).

> *WPS should be broader than war*. **What about security forces and police committing violence? What about community violence? Security and peace are needed for all of us as human beings". Nepal**

4.2 'Security' as human security

For LGBTIQ+ communities, security is not solely about protection from violence but encompasses a broader concept of **human security**, which includes access to resources, economic stability, healthcare, and other basic services.

In multiple countries, including Vietnam, Myanmar, and the Philippines, respondents emphasised that queer security should be understood through a rights lens, as it is about ensuring that individuals can live with dignity and without fear of persecution.

In a similar way to holistic conceptualisations of peace, one participant spoke about the need to view 'security' in relation to SOGIESC-diverse people in the Pacific more broadly:

"Security encompasses not only physical safety but also the ability to live our lives free from fear of violence on the basis of our SOGIESC. We know many people across the Pacific face great difficulties if we don't behave as society expects. The first violations of our security are usually within the family home" (Pacific Regional).

Within active conflict settings, transgender women are particularly vulnerable due to their heightened visibility, with a participant from Myanmar reporting at least four transgender women have been raped at military checkpoints since the coup. The same respondent also highlighted that security for SOGIESC-diverse people and activists must include **digital security**:

" A lack of digital security is really challenging, and affects the lives and security of local activists. It's especially hard for LBQ women and trans men who have more limited mobility [and so rely on technology]" (Myanmar).

Economic security is another key component of human security for SOGIE-diverse individuals. Many interviewees, including in Cambodia and Sri Lanka, highlighted how systemic discrimination in employment and social services leaves LGBTIQ+ individuals more vulnerable to economic instability. The lack of economic security further compounds other forms of insecurity, making it difficult for queer individuals to build stable lives.

Furthermore, security for SOGIE-diverse individuals, and women in particular, is strongly tied to their ability to access services tailored to their needs. For example, in Vietnam, respondents noted the importance of services such as domestic violence (DV) shelters, remarking that, ***"the space women are most likely to face violence and insecurity is in the home. So we need DV services, and we need to ask, are those services tailored to the needs of queer and trans women?"*** (Vietnam).

Finally, in many parts of the region, security is also about the ability to interact with law enforcement without fear of persecution or discrimination. Participants, including those representing both Asia and Pacific regional networks, raised the treatment of SOGIESC-diverse women at the hands of police and security services, describing arbitrary arrests, harassment, and even rape.

Section 5. Appetite for increased engagement

Across the Asia-Pacific region, some LGBTIQ+ organisations have already begun to engage with the WPS agenda, though the level of appetite for further involvement varies depending on the country, organisational focus, and perceived relevance of WPS to their ongoing work. For instance, in countries like Fiji, their involvement has been limited by the narrow focus of the existing WPS framework, while for one participant in Sri Lanka, WPS forms simply yet another UN process:

"We're engaged with more relevant processes such as the UPR and CEDAW. We don't have the time or resources to be engaged in everything, including WPS. There are so many branches of the UN, and so many different processes. Keeping track of it all is difficult and a waste of space in my brain. We'd much rather concentrate on what is going on in the country, with our community and the most pressing issues" (Sri Lanka).

For many organisations, including from Cambodia, the WPS agenda does hold some interest and appeal, but only to the extent that it aligns with their core mandates and ongoing work in areas such as anti-discrimination, human rights, and community security. Respondents frequently mentioned that their priorities are shaped by the immediate needs of their communities—needs that often involve addressing issues like access to justice and economic insecurity, which often fall outside traditional WPS programming and policy implementation. As a result, they are only likely to engage with WPS initiatives if the agenda broadens to include a wider conception of gender and security.

Some participants expressed significant enthusiasm for learning more about and participating in the WPS agenda, especially those from Indonesia, India, and Nepal:

> **"[Collaborating on WPS/GPS] would be a great opportunity because we do face peace and security challenges... [so] it aligns with the work that we already do... We'd love** *capacity strengthening for LGBTIQ organisations to understand the WPS agenda and to tie this to our ongoing advocacy* **for anti-discrimination protections".**
>
> **Indonesia**

In Vietnam, there is also an appetite to engage among SOGIESC organisations, but participants advised this would require WROs instigating their inclusion in relevant fora: ***"When the government talks about WPS, it's not inclusive. We'd like to... lobby for more detailed SOGIE inclusion... but we can't do it if we're not invited into the space***". (Vietnam).

Many other participants also recognised the potential of the WPS framework to advance peace and security for queer communities, while expressing concerns about the sustainability and relevance of short-term or project-based funding that may not support sustained impact. Participants emphasised the importance of sustainable, core funding that would enable long-term, meaningful engagement:

"Whatever funds there are, are only for projects – projects that are formulated abroad. [Our core work of] movement building is rarely part of them. We accept the funding for the projects to keep afloat, but they're rarely actually aligned with what we want to be doing. Sometimes it feels like [taking on new work like WPS projects] isn't worth doing because at some point the funding stops... This has been exasperating me for decades" (Philippines).

This view highlights a strong preference for funding that supports organisational growth, capacity-building, and strategic partnerships over time, allowing for deeper and more impactful engagement with WPS. There is widespread recognition that deeper queer engagement with the agenda will only be meaningful if the framework and funding is flexible enough to reflect the realities of SOGIESC-diverse needs and priorities. This shift would not only create greater space for LGBTIQ+ voices within the agenda but also ensure that their participation is sustainable.

5.1 What's in a frame? Recognising, resourcing queer GPS work beyond labels

A key theme that emerged from discussions with participants is the framing of peace and security work outside of the formal WPS agenda. Many LGBTIQ+ CSOs are already engaged in work that aligns with the core objectives of WPS, such as advocating for safety, justice, and rights in conflict and crisis settings, but this work is not necessarily labelled as "WPS." Instead, queer peace and security efforts are often framed through broader human rights, equality, and social justice lenses.

Indeed, across multiple countries, including Indonesia and Bangladesh, respondents emphasised that their organisations are already doing crucial work to strengthen the peace and security of their communities—work that aligns with the core pillars of WPS. In Bangladesh, one participant explained that his network is already working on peace, safety, and security: ***"Safety and security is one of the core components of our work. You can understand why." He went on to explain further, advising that: "We are working on access to justice, and human rights, but in essence these are all programmes for the peace and security of our community"*** (Bangladesh).

Thus, there are calls for greater recognition of how queer-led work around peace and security already exists in many places. This insight reflects a need to move beyond rigid categorisations, and acknowledge how local organisations are contributing to the peace and security agenda in ways that make sense for their context.

> **"We train LGBTQ individuals and orgs from a human rights perspective, but we haven't been involved in peace processes. It might be that** *we're already doing peace work, but that we use a different lens* **and different language". Myanmar**

Funding models again play a role in shaping how organisations frame their work. Participants highlighted that donors and policymakers often prioritise funding for specific WPS-labelled projects, which may not align with the holistic, long-term approaches to peace and security that queer organisations take. One respondent from the Philippines explained:

"The work is already being done to enhance the security of our community, through resilience work and community building work. But it's not being analysed through the lenses of this 'WPS paradigm'. But – I mean I'd like to think – that WPS is based on experiences on the ground. So then it's just a matter of translating it and rethinking what peace and security theory is" (Philippines).

In the short term, this reflects a need for flexible funding approaches that recognise and support queer peace and security work, regardless of the framing or terminology used. As a leading expert on queering peace and security, Dr Jamie Hagen, put it in an interview for this study:

"It's the work of the funding agencies to expand the concept of peace and security to make it expansive enough, rather than having the local [queer] organisations bending the other way... The impetus needs to come from the side that has the access and the power".

Section 6. Priorities for future action

"We need more *queer peacebuilders* **– we need** *more queer representation in peace and security*. **People will otherwise continue to see us as only present in the HIV space and the LGBTQI space – and our lives go beyond those issues" (Asia Regional).**

The following recommendations, based on interviews with local SOGIESC-diverse activists from across the Asia-Pacific region, aim to advance the WPS agenda through an inclusive lens.

6.1: Recommendations for the Australian government and regional multilateral organisations

1. Encourage SOGIESC inclusion in DFAT-funded WPS initiatives: Where possible, Australia should ensure that WPS-related funding, whether for civil society programming, NAP development or otherwise, promotes SOGIESC inclusion by encouraging or requiring engagement with LGBTQI+ CSOs in events and projects:

"If the Australian government is funding any institution or government's work on WPS, they [should] perform due diligence and say: 'have you involved this local CSO to ensure LGBTQ inclusion at the event/in the project?' They should do so; they have the right to ask. They shouldn't be silent on these issues" (Nepal).

2. Sustainable and ethical core funding: Prioritise long-term funding for peace and security work by grassroots organisations that are well-established in and trusted by their communities, including LGBTIQ+ organisations. The Australian government and regional multilateral organisations should move away from short-term, ad hoc project grants that often fail to provide stable support and instead invest in sustainable, core funding for grassroots LGBTQI+ organisations with minimal reporting requirements. Ethical funding practices should include providing direct grants to local CSOs/CBOs rather than funding through intermediaries, and paying upfront per diems and other expenses for activists attending international WPS-related events:

"Core, flexible funding is crucial – as is supporting LGBTQ groups, especially in covert ways, in responding to a disaster and being able to shift activities as a result of extremist threats, armed groups and shrinking civic space" (ASEAN Regional).

3. Local queer consultation: Consult with local SOGIESC communities and trusted CSOs before implementing GPS-related programmes or rolling out a humanitarian response:

"Always consult with local SOGIESC CSOs. Don't ever assume that national or international NGOs are representative or authoritative when it comes to SOGIESC. All donors must do adequate mapping, and must always keep in mind the do-no-harm approach" (Cambodia).

4. Support for local GPS research: Support efforts to collect and safely disseminate data and research to ensure LGBTQI+ experiences and perspectives are captured and inform Australia and regional multilateral organisation's WPS policy responses. This includes funding research initiatives that collect nuanced data on the challenges faced by LGBTQI+ individuals and their experiences of peace and security, as well as recognising their contributions to conflict resolution, transitional justice and peacebuilding.

"We need help in doing research, gathering and disaggregating data... to pressure the government..." (Philippines).

5. Promote intersectional and intergenerational approaches: Adopt frameworks that address the intersecting factors of race, class, gender identity, and age in addition to SOGIESC status. When platforming or funding SOGIESC-diverse representatives on GPS issues, remain mindful of the compounding marginalisations that LBQ women and gender-diverse people face in conflict and humanitarian settings, as well as their particular perspectives, strengths, resilience:

"We also need to think about the power dynamic within the LGBTQI movement. We need to amplify the voices of LBQ women. Even among ourselves, we discriminate and invisibilise women. If we can make space within these platforms, then we as LBQ women have a lot to share" (Nepal).

6. Law Enforcement Training: To address the widespread marginalisation of SOGIESC-diverse individuals within security and law enforcement systems, the Australian government should support gender-responsive community policing training, promoting SOGIESC inclusion and sensitivity:

"We definitely need training and sensitisation for police; if Australia could provide it then that would be great. There's work being done already, from the women's rights side. We've been invited to feed in on SOGIE for an hour, but we don't think that's enough. And it's not enough to train new recruits, it needs to go higher up" (Pacific Regional).

7. Post-Disaster Support and Refugee Policy: In the wake of natural disasters or other humanitarian crises, the Australian government and regional multilateral organisations should actively engage LGBTIQ+ organisations to ensure inclusive aid delivery. Policies and practices should address the needs of queer communities, including access to safe spaces, health services, and protection from gender-based violence in disaster relief contexts. Furthermore, the government should ensure that refugee policies are inclusive of SOGIESC-diverse people and provide adequate protection and support:

"Post disaster, if there is relief distribution, then humanitarian actors must work in close collaboration with established local SOGIE NGOs. [Because] many of our community don't have citizenship, ID should not be mandatory to receive support. Camps should [have] separate facilities and accommodation for trans people... humanitarian actors and donors need to be intersectional in approach" (Nepal).

8. Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS): Queer communities often face heightened mental health challenges, particularly in conflict or post-disaster settings. The Australian government and regional multilateral organisations should invest in MHPSS initiatives that are tailored to the needs of LGBTIQ+ people, ensuring they have access to support services that are safe, non-discriminatory, and responsive to their unique circumstances:

"The Australian government should be investing in SOGIE MHPSS work urgently, both in conflict zones and generally as well" (India).

9. Understanding Colonial Legacies: All development actors engaging with LGBTIQ people in development and humanitarian settings must understand the specific colonial histories and legacies that continue to shape and impact the experiences, rights, and social dynamics of these communities:

"First and foremost, [we] must decriminalise... It's been 138 years of prejudice since British colonial rule" (Sri Lanka).

10. Create space for engagement by LBQ and gender-diverse people in Australia: Acknowledge and celebrate the pioneering efforts of the Australian lesbian movement in promoting peace domestically and around the world, while acknowledging and eliminating practices that ostracise queer women:

"You'll find historical archives of lesbian and queer women leading this work in Australia. The negative side is that there has also been a history of exclusion across the peace and security sector".

6.2: Recommendations for women's rights organisations (WROs) leading on WPS

1. Promote inclusive partnerships and platform diverse voices: WROs should actively seek to include SOGIESC-diverse voices in their WPS/GPS-related programmes, policy work, and public platforms. This means creating meaningful spaces where LBQ and gender-diverse activists, especially from conflict- or disaster-affected contexts are not only present but are also central to the discussions and decision-making processes around peace and security. Ensuring partnerships with queer-led groups are equitable and driven by local priorities will help to create more relevant and impactful programming:

"If feminist organisations organise any meeting, workshop... please invite us, please engage us so that we can tell our story. We can contribute our knowledge" (Nepal).

2. Use language that reflects the diversity of experiences: The current use of the term "women" in many peace and security frameworks often fails to account for the diverse experiences of women, men, and SOGIESC-diverse people in conflict and humanitarian settings. Participants felt that more inclusive language, including ***"women in all their diversity"*** or ***"gender, peace, and security (GPS)"*** would better reflect the spectrum of experiences and promote a more inclusive peace and security agenda:

"GPS... allows for a broader and more inclusive analysis of peace and security issues, recognising that these issues affect people across the gender and sexuality spectrum." (Indonesia).

3. Acknowledge and validate existing queer peace and security work: Many LGBTIQ+ organisations frame their work within broader human rights discourses rather than specifically using WPS language or aligning their work with the pillars. WROs should recognise this work as part of the overarching peace and security landscape, even if it is not labelled as WPS:

"We are working on access to justice, and human rights, but in essence these are all programmes for the peace and security of our community" (Bangladesh).

4. Support Capacity Building and Skills Development for SOGIESC-Diverse CSOs: Where there is local appetite for greater engagement, providing training and capacity-building opportunities to SOGIESC-diverse activists and organisations can enhance their ability to participate effectively in WPS and broader peace and security initiatives. This may include training on WPS architecture and advocacy, peacebuilding and transitional justice, and other areas that are contextually-relevant:

"We'd love a capacity strengthening for LGBTIQ organisations to understand the WPS agenda, and to tie this to our ongoing advocacy for anti-discrimination protections" (Indonesia).

5. Understand the specific barriers and risks for SOGIESC-diverse networks: LGBTQI people and activists face heightened risks in times of conflict, displacement, or crisis, including violence, discrimination, and exclusion from relief and recovery efforts. WROs at the local, regional or international levels must be aware of these specific barriers before engaging with SOGIESC-diverse representatives on peace and security initiatives:

"It's important to note that what we do is much harder than a women's rights organisation. We have security issues on a daily basis while we do our work" (Sri Lanka).

6. Create Safe and Supportive Spaces for activists and organisations: In many conflict- and disaster-affected settings, women's rights organisations can support safe spaces for LGBTIQ+ activists to network, share experiences, and undertake their own core work. This could include offering platforms for activists to speak out on peace and security issues without fear of reprisal:

"We have had a lot of support from feminist networks and groups, for example co-coordinating workshops in target areas, or establishing support groups. [Through their cover], there was that safety" (Sri Lanka).

7. Acknowledge colonial legacies, prioritise neglected crises: When promoting GPS overseas, understanding the colonial histories that have shaped the legal, cultural, and social landscapes is critical. Minority world feminist organisations should work to deconstruct colonial narratives that continue to marginalise LGBTIQ+ people and perpetuate gender inequality. This includes being mindful of power dynamics when engaging in cross-cultural work and ensuring local voices are prioritised in peace and security efforts wherever possible. Further, neglected crises that are not receiving mainstream attention within the WPS/GPS landscape should be prioritised and amplified:

"If the international community really wants to advance GPS, they should focus on the corners where voices are not being heard." (Manipur).

8. Strengthen networks and foster solidarity within the movement: WROs leading WPS/GPS work should seek to foster long-term solidarity and alliances with SOGIESC-diverse groups, recognising that struggles for gender equality and LGBTIQ+ rights are deeply interconnected. Solidarity-based approaches should be rooted in mutual support and shared goals, rather than hierarchical structures that impose a singular agenda:

"I'd absolutely like to see more inclusion in WPS spaces at the regional and international levels. For the queer movement in India, the feminist movements have been torch-bearers for us... But we now need to recognise the diverse marginalities that exist in relation to gender... I think a lot of queer people have a lot to add to conversations on peace and security – about how we survive on a daily basis limited by constant insecurity and conflict. There has to be a lot of sharing and mutual learning together" (India).

About us

The Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security ('the Coalition') is a non-partisan and independent coalition of civil society organisations, networks and individuals working to advance the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda in Australia, Asia and the Pacific region and globally. The Coalition brings together activists, feminists, practitioners, humanitarian actors and those with first-hand experience working in the frontline on issues relating to women, peace and security. Coalition members have wide ranging expertise in gender and peace.

For more information:
www.wpscoalition.org

Edge Effect

Edge Effect is a global diverse SOGIESC (aka LGBTIQ+) humanitarian and development organization established in 2017. Edge Effect's mission is to ensure that the rights, needs and strengths of people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions and sex characteristics are addressed within the humanitarian and development sectors. Edge Effect works with LGBTIQ+ civil society organizations and communities, alongside donors, UN agencies, and international non-government organizations.

For more information:
www.edgeeffect.org

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Acknowledgements

The WPS Coalition acknowledges with thanks the financial support for the report provided by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The Coalition looks forward to continuing to work with government and civil society partners to advance a more inclusive WPS Agenda as Australia implements the second Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2021–2031. The WPS Coalition would like to especially thank the individuals and representatives from diverse LGBTIQ+ organisations from across the Asia-Pacific region who contributed their insights, experiences and recommendations that inform this report.

Report written by Kate Seewald, Lead Author for Edge Effect.
November 2024

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