



**Assessing UK Government Action
on Women, Peace and Security in 2015**

Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) is the UK's only Women, Peace and Security civil society network. We are a membership organisation of 17 NGOs and experts in the fields of development, human rights, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding.

We were founded to promote the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Our role is to promote and hold the UK government to account on its international commitments to women in conflict areas worldwide.

GAPS includes the following members: ActionAid UK, Amnesty International UK, CARE, Conciliation Resources, International Alert, International Rescue Committee UK, Northern Ireland Women's European Platform, Oxfam, Saferworld, Soroptomist International UK, United Nations Association UK, UN Women National Committee UK, Widows for Peace through Democracy, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Womankind Worldwide, Women for Women International, and World Vision.

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2015: a critical year

2015 has been a critical year for the Women, Peace and Security agenda as well as for peace and security issues generally.

From the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action in March through to the agreement of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals in September, the UN High-level Review on Women, Peace and Security in October, the 2015 Peace Building Architecture Review, and the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, the importance of achieving gender equality and peaceful societies has been recognised as a global priority.

At the UN High-level Review in October, a record number of states (113) attended the debate, and the Security Council unanimously passed resolution 2242 as the eighth resolution on Women, Peace and Security. To commemorate the High-level Review, a UN Global Study, "Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace",¹ was conducted to highlight the remaining gaps and challenges in the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. The study called on states to ensure women's participation is a central part of peacebuilding in international mediation and local peacebuilding efforts, to focus on conflict prevention over militarisation, to end impunity for crimes against women, to earmark financing for Women, Peace and Security in order to address the funding shortfalls severely hampering implementation of UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions, to strengthen the gender architecture of the UN, and to apply a 'gender lens' to the work of the Security Council.

Most importantly of all, the Global Study reminded governments that the **Women, Peace and Security agenda must be respected as a human rights mandate**: "the agenda of 1325 should not be 'securitized' and women should never be used as instruments in any military strategy. Their agency must be respected and their

autonomy and concerns should be the priority. Women peacebuilders in the field should be empowered to choose their priorities and determine their own strategies"². As security sector engagement with this agenda progresses, it must therefore do so within clearly defined limits that facilitate the improved understanding and fulfilment of gendered protection needs and prevent the advancement of military objectives that instrumentalise women. Failure to adhere to these limits not only puts the Women, Peace and Security agenda in jeopardy, but more significantly still, puts women themselves in danger too.

Beyond the UK's engagement and commitments in these global processes, a number of opportunities to promote Women, Peace and Security have emerged within UK policy processes, including the "National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015", the "Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015", and the new Aid Strategy "UK aid: Tackling global challenges in the national interest", all launched in November 2015.³ With the announcement that 50 per cent of the Department for International Development's (DFID) budget will be committed to conflict and fragile states,⁴ addressing the connections between the often siloed areas of conflict prevention, development, humanitarian action, resilience and peacebuilding must be a top priority as part of a comprehensive approach to promote human rights and stability. The Women, Peace and Security agenda provides a broad framework across these areas, and therefore offers a unique model of how they should be brought together with women's rights and gender equality at their core. Such opportunities to profile the Women, Peace and Security agenda sit alongside the UK government's legal obligation to consider the impact of its overseas aid spending on reducing gender inequality

under the International Development (Gender Equality) Act passed in 2014.⁵

In this report, Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) – the civil society platform on Women, Peace and Security in the UK – reviews key UK government announcements and tangible progress made in 2015. We focus on the implementation of the “UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2014-17” (NAP) and its associated ‘Implementation Plan’, drawing on the government’s own ‘Report to Parliament’ on the NAP published in December 2015 as well as the findings of a recent external evaluation of the UK NAP, also published in December 2015.⁶ In addition to drawing on the expertise of GAPS members, the report is supplemented with findings from a survey commissioned by GAPS to assess the impact of UK government activities on the ground. The survey was completed by 45 local women’s rights organisations and civil society based in (or in the neighbouring countries of) the NAP focus countries:

Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Libya, Myanmar, Somalia and Syria.

Part one of this report assesses UK progress across the pillars of UNSCR 1325 – *Participation, Prevention, Protection and Relief and Recovery* – while part two examines the UK’s implementation mechanisms. Part three highlights opportunities in the UK NAP focus countries over the coming year. The report concludes with recommendations to guide the UK government’s approach to Women, Peace and Security in 2016.

Looking ahead to 2016, GAPS calls on the UK government to continue to demonstrate its role as a leader on the Women, Peace and Security agenda on the global stage at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. Further still, the UK must do more to go beyond undertaking a series of actions on this agenda, and commit unwavering support for women’s meaningful inclusion, backed up by much needed resources and institutional systems. ■

Commitment

As champion governments such as Sweden affirm their commitment to ‘Feminist Foreign Policy’, GAPS calls on the UK government to step up and commit to the following minimum standards of engagement on Women, Peace and Security through its own planning, activities, reporting and accountability processes:

[1] Affirm that comprehensive action across the Women, Peace and Security agenda is a UK government priority, with women’s human rights at its core.

[2] Ensure the meaningful participation of women from conflict-affected contexts in all related UK-hosted peace, security, and development talks, and call for women’s meaningful engagement in those hosted by other countries.

[3] Guarantee that the UK government’s Women, Peace and Security plans can be resourced and implemented – earmarking finances for this agenda, tracking spending through gender markers in wider development, humanitarian and stabilisation funding, and through a dedicated budget for the NAP.

[4] Guarantee consultation of women’s rights organisations and local civil society in the design and review of UK Women, Peace and Security objectives and ensure that the views of women and girls and their reflections on new and emerging issues are integrated in UK government planning.

[5] Commit to strengthen transparency with an open book on the UK’s progress against Women, Peace and Security commitments including clear monitoring and reporting processes.

Taking stock of progress

1.1 The UK’s commitments at the UN High-level Review on 1325

The 2015 High-level Review of UNSCR 1325 was a crucial opportunity for UN member states and agencies to drive forward the Women, Peace and Security agenda worldwide. The UK government played a leading role in preparations for the High-level Review, including by organising a high-level event in New York on 30 September 2015 co-hosted with Namibia that helped galvanise political interest in the agenda. This likely contributed to the support for UNSCR 2242, and the high number of member states who spoke in support of the Women, Peace and Security agenda at the UN Security Council Open Debate.⁷

The UK also engaged in constructive dialogue with civil society representatives, including GAPS as well as officials of other member states. This dialogue enabled civil society groups to advocate for areas of focus within the new resolution’s content and emphasise the need to seize the opportunity to strengthen the global implementation of Women, Peace and Security goals. The result was a broadly positive resolution that reiterated the principles and ambitions of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and included some welcome new commitments.

At the High-level Review, the UK announced several positive new pledges to strengthen its own work on Women, Peace and Security, including to:

- “shine a torch” on women to ensure their voices are heard at all future UK-hosted peace-building events, and support women’s participation in wider peace processes through advocacy and funding;
- provide \$1 million USD in start-up funding to the Global Acceleration Instrument (GAI) and additional funding of over \$800,000 each year for two years to support new research at the Centre for Women, Peace and Security at the London School of Economics;
- ensure that all future relevant military doctrine is gender-sensitive and ensure all British troops deployed overseas receive training on Women, Peace and Security and Preventing Sexual Violence by November 2016, as well as growing and strengthening the pool of gender advisers within the Ministry of Defence (MoD);
- help secure positive outcomes for women and girls at next year’s World Humanitarian Summit and champion the Roadmap to Action to Protect Women and Girls in Emergencies;
- ensure that, by September 2016, all early warning and joint conflict analysis and assessment tools are fully gender-sensitive;
- drive forward the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative over the next five years, tackling impunity

for sexual violence crimes, ensuring widespread implementation of the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict;

- continue to provide technical and other support to help other governments develop, implement and measure the impact of their own Action Plans on UNSCR 1325;
- work to counter violent extremism including upstream activity targeted specifically at women. Women will be at the centre in the delivery of programming of overseas extremism work, both nationally and locally.⁸



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Such pledges, as well as continued efforts to address sexual violence in conflict, are all broadly welcome. However, the UK government did not go far enough. To play its role as a leader on Women, Peace and Security fully, the UK must move from rhetoric to standard-setting, with an unequivocal commitment that challenges and changes the paradigm for women’s participation in peace and security events, starting at home.

For example, since the UK has positioned itself as a Women, Peace and Security champion, it should have both the power and the will to guarantee women’s meaningful participation in any peace, security and development events hosted on British soil. Without that clear stance, opportunities to integrate women’s roles and perspectives in peace and security discussions will be missed. The UK-hosted Syria Donors’ Conference in February 2016 provides a clear opportunity to demonstrate UK leadership and commit to a new standard for such international events. The UK’s support for women’s and civil society’s participation – particularly the participation of women’s rights organisations – and meetings with

senior officials in relation to the London conference for Afghanistan in December 2014 provides a positive model to follow (as noted in section 1.2).

The provision of start-up funding for the GAI is a welcome move, and follow-up funding and influential engagement can help ensure this new initiative achieves its objectives, but much more is needed to achieve the goal of earmarking substantial UK funding for Women, Peace and Security activities in line with the recommendations of the Global Study as well as UNSCR 2122 (2013). Without a clear budget for the UK NAP and an effective system for tracking spending, it is difficult to assess the impact of UK aid (see section 2.1). This not only impacts on the UK's own transparency but weakens the UK's credibility in advocating for adequate resourcing and transparency of the NAPs of other governments.

In 2016, the UK government should provide further detail about what these commitments mean in practice and should ensure these are being integrated into the NAP. ■

1.2 The UK's progress across the pillars of 1325

The UK NAP includes actions under the pillars of 1325, namely: the participation of women in peace processes and decision-making, the prevention of conflict and violence against women and girls, protecting the human rights of women and girls, and addressing women's and girls' needs in relief and recovery.

GAPS welcomes the broad approach the UK government is taking in implementing its Women, Peace and Security commitments across this agenda, but believes that further efforts could be made to ensure a more comprehensive, integrated and effective approach.

For the UK's broader peace and security agenda to be able to promote gender equality and inclusive peace, gendered power dynamics, needs and vulnerabilities must be understood comprehensively and integrated into policy, planning and implementation. Concretely, this means that a comprehensive gender analysis and a consultation process with relevant actors and stakeholders should be conducted from the outset of an intervention, as well as efforts to foster linkages between the different pillars of 1325. Therefore, the UK government's announcement at the High-level Review of its intention to strengthen its efforts to better integrate gender analysis into the Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability is particularly welcome.⁹

Women are not a homogenous group and have individual experiences, challenges and ambitions. Women and girls face different and intersecting forms of discrimination (age, ethnicity, background) that can provide multiple barriers to their participation in peacebuilding efforts, including by increasing their

vulnerability to gender-based violence. For example in many traditional communities, widows of all ages and wives of the forcibly disappeared face multiple layers of marginalisation, lack access to justice that results in extreme poverty and abuse, and face barriers to building livelihoods. In such contexts, widowhood can be a root cause of poverty across generations, impacting upon their children's access to shelter, food and education, and therefore increasing the inequality and the poverty that fuels future conflicts. It is vital that peace accords address the injustices affecting all women and girls alongside constitutional and legal reform processes, and enhance data collection efforts to ensure the promotion of gender equality for all women and girls.

While the UK NAP Implementation Plan sets out a strategy under the Participation Pillar to increase both women's and girls' participation in decision-making,¹⁰ it fails to identify how the UK is targeting girls specifically in the associated activities throughout this section. Similarly, the UK NAP neglects to explore the role and influence held by older women in communities and the potential impact they could have on efforts to prevent conflict or build peace. Such recognition of different groups of women and girls is essential in light of the 'leave no one behind' principle that sits at the heart of the new Sustainable Development Goals, and to ensure the quality and sustainability of peace settlements.

While recognising these multiple layers of discrimination and marginalisation, it is also important to avoid casting women solely as victims. Labelling women as victims downplays their agency and the various social, political and economic roles they play. It also has an impact on defining where and when women should have a voice, which tends to further marginalise women and women's organisations in political processes.

A principal recommendation emerging from the baseline evaluation of the UK's current Women, Peace and Security efforts is the need to focus on tackling the *root causes* of the challenges, human rights abuses and inequalities experienced by women and girls in conflict-affected contexts, rather than simply addressing the symptoms.¹¹ In taking forward this recommendation, GAPS urges the UK government to consider the intersectional discrimination faced by many women and girls in its focus countries when implementing the NAP over the remaining two years of its life-span. It must do more to elaborate how it is adopting a comprehensive approach across the pillars of 1325 to promote the rights of all women and girls and their full and active participation.

Taking gender seriously also requires engaging effectively with men and boys. While we applaud the inclusion of a commitment in the NAP to "work with men and boys"¹² and new language on "engagement by men and boys as partners" in UNSCR 2242,¹³ as well as the recommendation in the NAP external evaluation that the UK should support more programmes that work towards changing social norms that perpetuate violence, incorporating a transformative gender approach needs to

be taken further. The Global Study notes that "cultures of militarized masculinities create and sustain political decision-making where resorting to the use of force becomes a normalized mode for dispute resolution".¹⁴ This is true not only at the local level in conflict-affected contexts, but across all countries, institutions and organisations working on peace and security. In other words, engaging with men and boys on this agenda

requires activities which aim to transform social norms that equate power with manhood and masculinity, particularly in civilian and military institutions. Furthermore, gendered approaches need to go beyond the male/female binary and also engage with often overlooked gender identities such as trans- and intersex persons, who may at times face extreme levels of violence and vulnerability ■



← Samira Hamidi of the Afghan Women's Network protests Afghan women's exclusion from the 2014 NATO conference in Wales
Courtesy Amnesty International
UK © Barry Batchelor/PA Wire

Participation

GAPS strongly supports the UK government's commitments to promote women's participation and involvement in peace processes within the NAP and at the 2015 High-level Review of 1325. This builds on previous UK government efforts such as the London Conference on Afghanistan in 2014 where one GAPS survey respondent from Afghanistan noted that the UK helped to facilitate the participation of women's groups. Previously, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) also provided funding for women's rights organisations to participate in summits, for example the UK-hosted

Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in June 2014.¹⁵

The tentative resumption of peace talks in 2016 to resolve conflicts such as those in Syria and Yemen provides the first major test cases for the UK as well as the wider international community to live up to their recently made pledges to support women's meaningful participation. Insisting on such participation from the outset of such international peace processes as a condition of support, in alliance with like-minded actors, would accelerate a paradigm shift in the approach to international peace building.

UK NAP outcome:

active inclusion of women, and women and girls' interests, in decision-making process relating to the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.

Outputs:

- The UK encourages grass roots participation by women and girls;
- The UK encourages meaningful political participation by women and girls;
- The UK encourages governments to develop strategies for their countries and ministries that foster meaningful participation by women and girls.

Getting women to the table is critical to ensuring that women's rights are addressed within any peace process. This gender-just approach to building peace is not only better for women and girls but also increases the quality of the peace agreement itself. The Global Study provides us with compelling evidence that the purpose of women's participation is not simply about achieving a gender balance but also about improving the inclusiveness and durability of peace. The Graduate Institute of Geneva, in an in-depth analysis of 40 peace processes, has shown that women's ability to influence negotiations increases the chances of agreements being reached. The strong influence of women in negotiation processes also correlated positively with a greater likelihood of agreements being implemented.¹⁶ Key to this is a linkage of informal and formal levels of conflict resolution and peacebuilding to ensure women and women's rights organisations are given voice and status in official processes.

In 2016, concrete steps must be taken to ensure that women are not only at the table during these processes but also able to meaningfully *influence* them: as representatives of women's rights organisations and civil society, government representatives, mediators, members of negotiating teams, and expert analysts. We welcome the UK's advocacy for Libyan women's representation at the October 2015 Senior Officials Meeting in London on support to a new Libyan government, noted in the 2015

Report to Parliament.¹⁷ However, further information is needed on how women's voices are integrated within such high-level dialogues to ensure effective influence.

It is vital that beyond high-level dialogue, women's participation in peacebuilding is also recognised as part of the UK's local-level activities, including through development programming. One respondent to the GAPS survey from the DRC noted that, "Within the framework of our common programme, DFID is very keen to ensure women's participation in decision making fora. However, these do not revolve around peace and security". Systematic consultations with women in peacebuilding organisations and women's rights organisations in the preparations for peace talks and the oversight of peace agreement implementation can help to bridge this gap.

UK government efforts to increase women's participation must therefore further focus on collaborating with networks and platforms already established in-country, and supporting the formation of such platforms where these are not yet in place. Yet under the activities listed in the NAP and its associated Implementation Plan, core costs support to such networks appears to be a low priority for the UK government. In addition to the need for UK government consultation with these groups (see section 2.2), the UK should further call on other governments to ensure the participation of women in the development and monitoring of national-level NAPs and broader Women, Peace and Security efforts ■¹⁸

Prevention

GAPS welcomes the UK government's affirmation at the UN High-level Review that "conflict prevention and early warning remain at the heart"¹⁹ of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. We look forward to the implementation of the commitment to ensure "all early warning and joint conflict analysis and assessment tools are fully gender-sensitive" by September 2016, and welcome that work is underway to ensure gender indicators are incorporated into both the "Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability" and "Countries at Risk of Instability" matrices as noted in the 2015 Report to Parliament.²⁰ GAPS urges the UK government to set out how it will ensure that this guidance is monitored and implemented. For gender-sensitive early warning indicators to be effective and relevant, they must be context-specific and involve women and girls at all stages of the early warning chain, including the setting and monitoring of indicators.

The Global Study notes the importance of integrating a gender perspective in structural, or long-term conflict prevention as well as shorter-term measures such as early warning systems.²¹ The Global Study also finds that "a militarized view of conflict prevention sells resolution 1325 short of its transformative vision for a more equal, just and peaceful world".²² GAPS would therefore urge

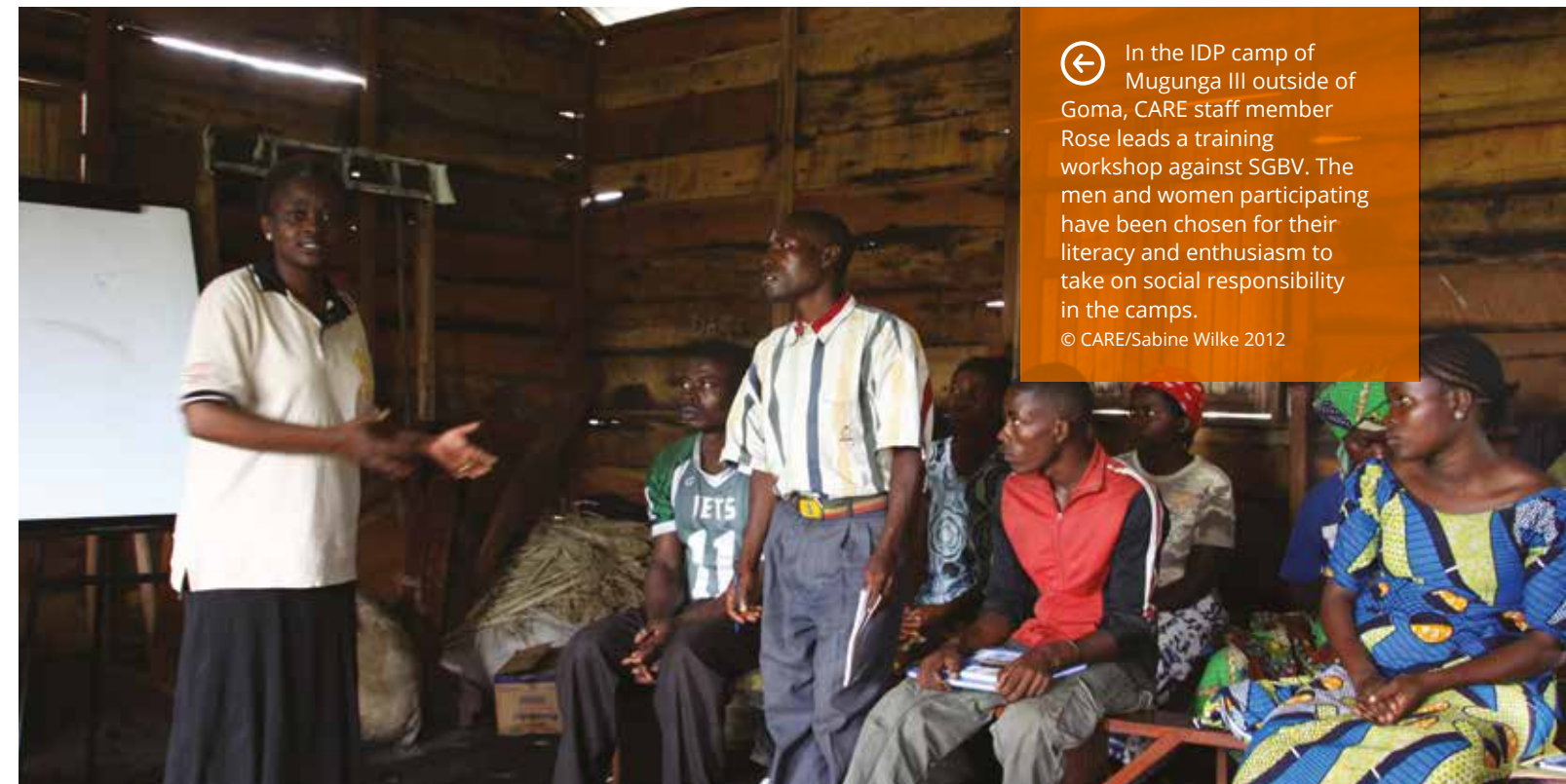
UK NAP outcome:

prevention of conflict and all forms of structural and physical violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence.

Outputs:

- The UK develops new research protocols, policy, programmes and guidance regarding the prevention of conflict;
- The UK develops new research protocols, policy, programmes and guidance regarding violence against women and girls;
- The UK works to end impunity related to conflict-related violence against women and girls;
- The UK delivers a set of programmed activities that prevents violence against women and girls;
- The UK will work at home to prevent specific forms of violence against women and girls.

the government to set out how it will integrate the Women, Peace and Security agenda into upstream conflict prevention strategies. The UK government should further demonstrate leadership to support technical



← In the IDP camp of Mugunga III outside of Goma, CARE staff member Rose leads a training workshop against SGBV. The men and women participating have been chosen for their literacy and enthusiasm to take on social responsibility in the camps.

© CARE/Sabine Wilke 2012

guidance in the implementation of provisions on gender-based violence within the UN Arms Trade Treaty,²³ in consultation with women's rights groups.

The UK appears to have taken on board some of the concerns previously raised by GAPS, particularly that in any efforts to draw stronger links between the Women, Peace and Security and counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism agendas, women must not be instrumentalised in pursuit of military objectives. In line with UNSCR 2242 and commitments to uphold international human rights and humanitarian law, the UK should ensure that its strategies to counter terrorism and violent extremism meaningfully analyse and actively mitigate impacts on civilian populations, including women and girls, including by consulting women and gender experts during their design. Furthermore, GAPS is encouraged that UNSCR 2242 "welcomes the increasing focus on inclusive upstream prevention efforts" and urges the UK government to give greater priority to non-militarised responses to transnational militant groups.²⁴

GAPS welcomes the UK government's increased focus on and prioritisation of the prevention of violence against women and girls (VAWG), in 2014, notably through a range of high-profile initiatives such as the Global Summit on PSVI (Ending Sexual Violence in Conflict Summit) led by the FCO, and the work on addressing all forms of VAWG, and the DFID-led 'Girl Summit'.²⁵ However, further efforts should now be made to translate the commitments made in these initiatives into action on the ground in conflict-affected contexts based on local, context-specific analyses, and aimed at locally-tailored approaches. One

survey respondent from the DRC noted the need to share further information about the PSVI campaign with locally based groups.

Additionally, there continues to be a need for a more comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of all types of gender-based violence and violence against women and girls. GAPS therefore recommends better integration of DFID's "Theory of Change for Tackling VAWG",²⁶ and work to transform discriminatory attitudes and behaviours as well as access to justice and prosecutions into new activities in years 2 and 3 of the NAP. GAPS welcomes the July 2015 publication of the "Guidance Note on Addressing Violence against Women and Girls in Health Programming".²⁷ To ensure this and other guidance notes on VAWG are utilised at country level, this should be monitored and supported through workshops and other learning events.

In order to address the root causes of VAWG (as identified in DFID's Theory of Change) and maximise prevention, the UK government must ensure that approaches are driven by local women's rights organisations, consulting and involving them in the design, implementation and monitoring of global and national plans for Women, Peace and Security as well as ensuring they are adequately funded.

The UK government should further increase its provision of gender experts to UN Headquarters and UN peace operations and deliver on its commitment in the 2015 Report to Parliament to work with the UN to increase the participation of women in senior UN leadership and military/ policy contingents ■²⁸



← A woman speaks to a police officer in Goma, DRC
© Carol Allen-Storey for International Alert

Protection

Persistent, deep-rooted gender inequality is a root cause of gender-based violence. States have clear international legal obligations to act with due diligence to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of women and girls. The UK government could do more to ensure that it takes a consistent approach to championing the human rights of women and girls both in the UK and overseas. For example, the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) provides a crucial framework to encourage governments to improve their actions to end violence against women, including measures to ensure protection.²⁹ Yet the UK has still not ratified the convention despite it presenting a key opportunity to demonstrate ongoing commitment and leadership to respond to violence against women and girls. Additionally, GAPS notes the concerns of human

rights organisations, echoed by the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, over the apparent downgrading of human rights as a priority issue within the FCO and the impacts this could have on the UK's diplomatic work to stand up for the human rights of women and girls.³⁰ GAPS believes in order to achieve a consistent approach to human rights, all UK government departments must be explicit in protecting the rights of women and girls in all circumstances, especially given its inclusion in the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review.³¹

The important activities noted in the 2015 Report to Parliament to train troops overseas on sexual violence marks good progress.³² However, this must sit alongside UK efforts to promote and support stronger accountability mechanisms for zero tolerance of abuse by military personnel.

GAPS welcomes the UK government's support for survivors

UK NAP outcome:

women's and girl's safety, physical and mental health and economic security are assured and their human rights upheld in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Outputs:

- The UK will increase the quantity, quality and culture of protection available to women and girls overseas;
- The UK will protect women and girls from gender-based violence;
- The UK will protect the rights of women and girls and will empower them by increasing the employment, health, education and training services available to women and girls.

of gender-based violence, including medical, health, psychosocial, legal and other support services.³³ GAPS would welcome more information on the UK government's funding and

support for such protection services, including measures to provide protection and support to women human rights defenders providing these services.

As recognised by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in his 2015 report, women human rights defenders (WHRDs) face a number of risks including sexual violence, public shaming (depicted as prostitutes or otherwise 'immoral' women) and targeting by religious groups. WHRDs have also highlighted their marginalisation from participation mechanisms and consultation processes.³⁴ Given the failure of countries such as Afghanistan to adequately protect WHRDs or to prosecute perpetrators owing to "institutionalised indifference" on the part of the authorities, it is vital that international actors including the UK support measures to ensure the safety of WHRDs.³⁵ International support for Afghan WHRDs has been ad-hoc and funding short-term.³⁶ GAPS welcomes the UK's commitments in the NAP Implementation Plan to supporting WHRDs in Syria and Afghanistan, including the implementation of the European Union (EU) Action plan on human rights defenders. It is encouraging that these commitments cut across the Participation and Prevention pillars, reflecting the importance of a comprehensive approach to Women, Peace and Security, but this should be further reflected in the UK's protection efforts. GAPS welcomes UK support to a number of projects with human rights defenders and NGOs working to end sexual violence in the DRC, South Sudan, Somalia, Guatemala, Nigeria, Kosovo, Colombia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Myanmar, as noted in the 2015 G7 Accountability Report, and urges the UK government to ensure protection of these groups is at the centre of these efforts.³⁷

The UK government should take further steps to monitor the risks that WHRDs face in all focus countries and to provide regular information through the NAP reporting mechanisms on the actions that have been taken by embassies to engage with local and national women's rights organisations to support their work, in line with UNSCR 1889, which calls for the systematic assessment of "the particular needs of women and girls in post-conflict situations, including ... information on their needs for physical security and participation in decision-making and post-conflict planning, in order to improve system-wide response to those needs".³⁸ The UK government can extend its protection work into the community, including women's rights organisations, through funding and supporting programming that builds community capacity to hold security and justice sectors to account for protecting the human rights of women and girls. Such projects must be context-specific, respond to the needs of the community and engage a range of stakeholders in order to ensure that protection is provided in a comprehensive and sustainable way.

In addition, the UK government should use its position on the UN Human Rights Council, and candidacy for a further term on that body, to promote and protect women's human rights. The UK Government should

pay particular attention to WHRDs, including by supporting relevant resolutions in the Council and Third Committee of the General Assembly, and by supporting the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

Finally, the UK government should work towards the full realisation of women and girls' human rights as its primary objective. While GAPS notes the increased interest and commitment from the MoD and the



↓ Women in Rwanda protest against violence. Courtesy Women for Women International.
© Mark Darrough

Strategic Defence and Security Review to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and for taking into account the protection of women's rights into its work as per many GAPS recommendations, this must be done for the sake of women's rights and not for furthering military aims. The UK should take care to ensure it is acting in the interests of women and girls affected by conflict, violence and insecurity ■



“When I was younger, droughts and floods still had names”, says 28-year old Qadan, who is a single-mother. “Now they have become so frequent that we don’t even bother anymore.” Qadan lives in a camp for internally displaced people in Burao in the North of Somaliland. “We experienced droughts and storms before, but we could still recover and prepare. Now we rebuild our houses just to see them collapse again a few months later.” Qadan’s 6-year old daughter Ubahe visits the school CARE supports in the camp. Qadan is divorced and the only means of living she has is money that her mother sends her.

© CARE/Johanna Mitscherlich 2015

Relief and recovery

Over the past year the UK government has taken positive steps to prioritise gender equality, address gender-based violence and promote women’s and girls’ agency in the context of humanitarian relief and recovery.

GAPS strongly welcomes the commitment outlined at the High-level Review to make outcomes for women and girls a priority at the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016.³⁹ The UK’s advocacy to encourage other states and donors to make transformative commitments on humanitarian action at the summit to ensure that women and girls are better protected from gender-based violence and gender discrimination will be critical.

Following the UK and Sweden-led Call to Action to Protect Women and Girls in Emergencies in 2013, DFID has continued to play an active and important role in driving this agenda. As noted in the 2015 Report to Parliament, over the past year DFID

has supported a global-level process to design a new ‘Roadmap’, which was launched in October 2015.⁴⁰ This is a potentially important step in providing a platform through to 2020 for promoting accountability for the implementation of the Call to Action commitments. Furthermore, the UK government’s upcoming commitments towards the Call to Action’s Roadmap Implementation should continue to prioritise life-saving services for survivors in emergencies, violence prevention and women’s empowerment.

Looking forward, it will be important for the UK to leverage its influence through funding, technical assistance and diplomacy to build momentum amongst a wider range of governments and other stakeholders to join the Call to Action and implement its Roadmap. With ‘localisation’ emerging as a major issue in the humanitarian sector ahead of the World Humanitarian Summit to

Outcome:

Women’s and girls’ specific needs are prioritised in conflict and post-conflict relief efforts

Outputs:

- The UK provides a rapid response to the needs of girls and women in humanitarian conflict and post-conflict situations

ensure concrete action on the ground, DFID has an important role to play in supporting the efforts of southern governments and civil society towards women’s and girls’ empowerment, protection and assistance in relief and recovery. In this context, joined-up approaches across DFID’s development and humanitarian programmes, as well as FCO support linked to wider Women, Peace and Security engagement in different country contexts, will be key.

DFID has also taken steps to better assess the extent to which its partners on the ground in humanitarian

emergencies are integrating gender equality and GBV into programming. This is critical in the context of the new Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action, launched in 2015,⁴¹ which cover minimum standards all humanitarian sectors must meet to reduce the risks of GBV faced by women and girls in all humanitarian settings. DFID has been a strong supporter of monitoring compliance with these standards, including by supporting a recent evaluation of the implementation of the IASC GBV Guidelines in the Syria Regional Response.⁴² DFID should continue to support the evaluation and implementation of these guidelines on major and new emergencies and strengthen the implementation of partners’ bilateral monitoring and evaluation through policies and practices. Similarly, DFID should call for stronger accountability of GBV coordination bodies, which support the implementation of these guidelines and the provision of GBV specialised services in emergencies.

At the global level, the past year has seen wider efforts to innovate and promote more rigorous approaches to accountability for stand-alone gender equality programming and mainstreaming in humanitarian action, in particular through the piloting of ‘gender equality measures’ linked to efforts to strengthen the UN-NGO IASC Gender Marker for humanitarian funding.⁴³ These pilots have sought to promote accountability across the programme cycle, including the design, monitoring and evaluation stages in contexts such as Lebanon and Jordan. GAPS welcomes the positive impact of the UK’s support over the last year in the DRC to make systematic improvements to the percentage of funds that score positively against the gender marker in the Common Humanitarian Fund.⁴⁴ DFID

should continue to strengthen accountability mechanisms with implementing partners across all humanitarian sectors and support the push to include an outcome on this issue at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.

GAPS welcomes DFID’s technical guidance, training and ongoing support for humanitarian teams to ensure VAWG is “adequately considered in emergency interventions”, as well as the recent mapping of humanitarian programmes addressing VAWG, as noted in the 2015 Report to Parliament.⁴⁵ Further, in 2016 DFID should develop current efforts to promote a basic project level of gender mainstreaming to implement ‘Gender Audits’ of its partners towards promoting gender mainstreaming in contexts such as the Syrian response across their organisational structure/culture (including attention to increasing the numbers of female staff from field to leadership levels). Current project-based approaches are inadequate in tackling the social and political norms that obstruct gender-sensitive programming ■

“ The UK will champion the Roadmap to Action to Protect Women and Girls in Emergencies – and help secure positive outcomes for women and girls at next year’s World Humanitarian Summit ”

UK commitment at the High-level Review on 1325, October 2015



Beneficiaries receiving unconditional cash as part of CARE’s Emergency Drought Response in Badhan village, Sanaag region, Somaliland.

© CARE/Musawi

1.3 The UK's NAP evaluation findings

At the beginning of 2015, the UK government commissioned a baseline evaluation of the UK 2014-2017 NAP, which was published in December 2015. The evaluation took stock of implementation to date and the wider contribution of the NAP to Women, Peace and Security efforts.

Key findings indicate that while the UK government is implementing a number of Women, Peace and Security initiatives across focus and non-focus countries, these were not often necessarily driven by the NAP itself but were already taking place within national programmes.⁴⁶ Further, it was found that while there was a commitment among UK staff in conflict-affected countries towards Women, Peace and Security issues, they would welcome further support in how to better mainstream this agenda into their work.⁴⁷ The evaluation highlighted that gaps persist in the successful integration of the Women, Peace and Security agenda into departmental strategies at Whitehall level, which often fail to acknowledge the UK's NAP.⁴⁸ Significantly, the evaluation found that most of the UK Women, Peace and Security programmes focused on

the symptoms rather than addressing the root causes of conflict and discrimination against women and girls.⁴⁹ For example, while supporting service provision to survivors of GBV is crucial, programmes should also increase their focus on addressing the underlying social norms and structures that contribute to discrimination against women and girls.

The evaluation provides recommendations to strengthen the UK's Women, Peace and Security approach going forward, including that the NAP should provide a greater focus on the underlying causes of conflict and discrimination against women and girls, urging the UK government to look at what role women can have in preventing conflict (see section 1.2 of this report). It also suggests that work on the post-2017 NAP should begin early to allow the development of a follow-up NAP that is strategic, country-led and takes into account the views of a wide range of stakeholders. GAPS fully endorses these recommendations and, as part of the shift towards a more context-specific and country-owned process both in the current NAP and NAP post-2017, urges the government to consult with local

At the Warrap State Youth Forum on Conflict Prevention, sponsored by World Vision, more than 100 young women and men gather to discuss peace and reconciliation in South Sudan.
©2015 World Vision/ Jon Warren



groups, particularly women's rights organisations, in identifying priorities as part of planning processes (see section 2.2).

GAPS would expect to see the UK government commission an external evaluation at the end of this NAP, and for the findings to be made public and used to help inform the next phase of UK Women, Peace and Security initiatives. Within the end evaluation and any mid-line evaluation, GAPS urges that the perspectives of women and girls are sought, in order to better understand their needs and to understand whether UK action has led to positive changes on the ground ■

1.4 Progress in mainstreaming Women, Peace and Security across the UK's conflict and humanitarian agenda

Women, Peace and Security must be front and centre of the UK's foreign policy agenda in order to support broader efforts to prevent violent conflict and reduce gender inequality.

The National Action Plan states that the UK's work on Women, Peace and Security must be seen as integral to everything it does in tackling violent conflict and building peace internationally. It is therefore critical that beyond the activities listed in the NAP, the UK government mainstreams Women, Peace and Security considerations into all of its work on and in conflict-affected and fragile states. GAPS notes the

government's integration of gender into the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF)⁵⁰ application process, and welcomes further clarity on how all suppliers to the CSSF framework will contribute to the implementation of the UK's Women, Peace and Security objectives.

GAPS notes the recognition in the 2015 Strategic Security and Defence Review that women's rights are central to greater peace and stability, which as noted in section 1.2 must be done for the sake of women's rights and not for furthering military aims. We also welcome the commitment within the review to "promote the

active participation of women in peace-building discussions, including through work with governments such as in Afghanistan and Iraq"⁵¹ and continued leadership to address sexual violence in conflict. In the context of the new announcements in the 2015 Spending Review and Autumn Statement of a £500 million ODA crisis reserve, "enabling flexible, quick and effective cross-government responses to crises"⁵² and expansion of the CSSF from £1 billion in 2015-16 to over £1.3 billion by 2019-20, commitments to mainstreaming must be delivered in practice ■⁵³

Towards effective implementation

The UK government's positive engagement on Women, Peace and Security, in fora such as the 2015 High-level Review on UNSCR 1325 and other multilateral engagement (including at EU and African Union level)⁵⁴ must be matched with clear and sustained efforts towards effective implementation. This is essential if the UK's efforts are to bring about real change for women in conflict-affected countries. As a GAPS survey respondent from Libya noted: the "implementation of the NAP on the ground has yet to materialise".

Increasing skills and the quality of UK engagement on Women, Peace and Security is critical. The importance placed on training in the Military of Defence, recognised in the commitment at the High-level Review to "ensure all UK troops deployed overseas will receive training on Women, Peace and Security"⁵⁵ is laudable, alongside the forthcoming Training Needs Analysis on all current gender and sexual violence training provided by the Armed Forces.⁵⁶ However, as noted in the NAP evaluation, more training is needed: Women, Peace and Security training should be made available to government staff in order to equip them to mainstream Women, Peace and Security concerns in their work and programmes.⁵⁷

The UK government has also invested positively in the research agenda on VAWG and Women, Peace and Security⁵⁸ more broadly in 2015, alongside offering technical support guides to staff including a best practice guide on integrating gender into CSSF programming. GAPS welcomes the recruitment of a gender advisor to support gender mainstreaming in programmes across the Middle East and North Africa within the CSSF⁵⁹ as well as the review undertaken by the MoD in 2015 to assess the need for military gender advisors.⁶⁰ Such staff capacity is essential to embed systemic shifts in support of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Yet, without a budget for the NAP, dedicated financing or adequate tracking systems for Women, Peace and Security, without concerted efforts to consult with local organisations and women's groups in the NAP focus countries, without mechanisms to adapt to changing contexts, and without strong accountability mechanisms, much of the UK's rhetoric in 2015 will fail to translate into meaningful action. During 2016, the UK government should look at how new mechanisms can be introduced to address these gaps and ensure effective implementation. As the lead on Women, Peace and Security at the UN Security Council, the UK should promote a model of excellence on implementation to ensure it can achieve its ambition to "capitalise on the renewed energy to maintain pressure for real change and to ensure the next fifteen

years deliver more for women and girls affected by conflict than the past fifteen" ■⁶¹

2.1 Financing

As one of the world's leading humanitarian and development donors and a recognised champion of gender equality, the UK has a crucial role to play not only as the implementer of its own NAP but as a provider of aid and an influential advocate for good donor policy and practice. UK action and leadership in fulfilling these roles is crucial because of the general lack of resources worldwide to implement Women, Peace and Security commitments, which was noted in the Global Study as one of the most persistent obstacles to progress over the past 15 years.⁶²

Although the gender focus of bilateral aid, multilateral interventions, funding to civil society and national public expenditures has modestly increased in the past decade, "the shift has neither been sufficient nor transformative".⁶³ A review of 47 national action plans undertaken in 2014 showed that only 11 had a specified budget attached to their implementation – a gap the UN Global Study reiterated as representing a crucial flaw. The percentage of overseas development assistance (ODA) specifically allocated to support gender equality in the peace and security sector – especially as a principal objective – is particularly low and far short of the level required to fulfil Women, Peace and Security commitments.⁶⁴ Among other challenges, women's civil society organisations continue to face significant funding shortages despite often being at the frontline of responses to crises. To achieve lasting social transformation of gender inequalities takes time and requires long-term funding.

The UK NAP rightly states that, "government action needs resources to match".⁶⁵ A number of funding sources and channels for Women, Peace and Security activities have been utilised in recent years. In particular, funding has been streamed from the Conflict Pool, replaced in April 2015 by the new CSSF. Women, Peace and Security objectives will be integrated into the CSSF, which contains a focus on addressing sexual violence in conflict.

However, the UK does not specify dedicated resources for Women, Peace and Security work (other than in the multilateral stream of the CSSF), on the grounds that it discourages attempts to mainstream gender into all activities. Although the commitment to mainstreaming gender equality is laudable – and should continue – GAPS believes it should be complemented by allocating dedicated resources for Women, Peace and Security.

Without a clear budget for the NAP or earmarked financing for Women, Peace and Security activities, it is difficult to assess the quantity, focus and effectiveness of UK aid in delivering its commitments on Women, Peace and Security, which weakens transparency. This potentially deprives the UK not only of due credit for its achievements but also of essential experience and credibility to promote adequate resourcing and transparency in the implementation of NAPs by other governments.

The UK should also commit to using gender markers (building on OCED and IASC markers) to better track Women, Peace and Security spending, in line with recommendations in UNSCR 2242.⁶⁶ The UN minimum target of 15 per cent of peacebuilding expenditure to be allocated to further gender equality provides a reasonable and achievable target for UK aid principally focused on gender equality in the peace and security sector, and an opportunity to reinforce a global standard for others to match.⁶⁷ Additionally, GAPS calls on the UK government to examine and publish findings on the impact of earmarking at least 15 per cent of ODA channelled to crisis and conflict contexts to support women's needs and further gender equality.⁶⁸

The UK should heed the recommendations and spirit of UNSCR 2242, which encourages Member States to increase their funding on Women, Peace and Security, including through increasing aid in conflict and post-conflict situations for programmes that further gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as through support to civil society (also outlined in UNSCR 2122).⁶⁹ It also recognises the new Global Acceleration Instrument (GAI) on women's engagement in peace and security and humanitarian affairs, in addition to other mechanisms, as a way to attract resources, coordinate responses and accelerate implementation.

GAPS welcomes the UK's commitment to provide \$1 million USD start-up funding to the GAI, announced at the UN High-level Review.⁷⁰ The commitment represents support for a mechanism that promises to address the lack of accessible funding faced by frontline women's civil society organisations. Continued technical and financial engagement by the UK will be crucial as the GAI becomes operational. Looking ahead to 2016, GAPS is keen to continue its dialogue with the UK government on how to ensure the GAI delivers on its potential to drive policy coherence and implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, including accessible funding for local civil society organisations (particularly women's rights organisations). As part of such efforts, GAPS believes the UK should continue to take an active role in the Women, Peace and Security Financing Discussion Group through which the GAI was developed, as well as taking on a leading role in the GAI's oversight and governance through membership of the relevant steering or advisory group ■

“ **Planning meetings are important to reflect together... The involvement of beneficiaries in planning activities gives the advantage of ensuring that outcomes respond to real needs** ”

GAPS Survey respondent, DRC

2.2 In-country consultation, coordination and communication

Consultation on UK Women, Peace and Security objectives and activities with civil society groups and women's rights organisations based in fragile and conflict-affected states is vital in meeting the needs and realising the rights of women and girls, increasing impact and ensuring value for money. It is these local organisations who best understand the cultural, social and political context in which Women, Peace and Security principles can be applied, and, as one survey respondent from Syria noted, they are keen to learn more about the UK government's work. Therefore, their expertise should be drawn upon to identify needs, priorities and methodologies and to monitor impacts.

The UK government should be proactive in developing a communications and outreach strategy in each of its priority countries that is tailored to the capacities of local civil society. Survey respondents suggested a range of tools and approaches on consultation, including newsletters sent around to civil society networks, with clear advice on how to get in touch with UK officials, along with a series of workshops and periodic planning meetings. One survey respondent from DRC noted: “It is important to establish a relationship with local communities to understand their real needs and address them in a specific manner”. Another respondent highlighted the importance of disclosing information on the UK government's activities on embassy websites so that local NGOs have a better sense of the UK's plans. As one respondent in Libya noted, the UK must also ensure it reaches a broad range of groups by providing translation, because currently “the UK government only deals with certain organisations”.

GAPS strongly welcomes the UK government's bi-annual consultation meetings with GAPS members in London, which provide an opportunity to share priorities from member organisations and partners based in conflict-affected countries. Positively, the UK government, as part of the development process for the current NAP, provided funding for consultative workshops in three of the focus



← A meeting of the CARE-supported Umoja Ni Nguvu (“Unity is Power”) income generation group in Goma, DRC.
© CARE/Jake Lyell 2013

countries: Myanmar, Somalia and Afghanistan. GAPS organised and facilitated these workshops in association with Oxfam, CARE and Women for Women International in order to provide context-specific recommendations for the UK's Women, Peace and Security efforts.⁷¹

As spelled out in the NAP implementation plan, the UK government has committed to “consult with UK civil society and priority country civil society in advance of each annual report” and updates from the ground are welcomed and sought. However, such systematic annual consultations are not noted within the 2015 Report to Parliament. Annual consultations are necessary to provide key fora to strategise on NAP priorities. But these must be the minimum measure taken, complemented with longer term mechanisms for regular consultation. One survey respondent from Somalia noted that “the best way the UK government to consult with organisation[s] [is]... through dialogue. That is not one meeting every few years, but more focused and targeted engagements that can generate valuable contributions and help shape the Women, Peace and Security agenda in Somalia and Somaliland.” The UK government should review its own processes for the ongoing participatory involvement of local groups and women's rights organisations in the NAP priority countries to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate its work on Women, Peace and Security. One respondent to the GAPS survey in the DRC noted that women's groups' advocacy to “the British Embassy [is] well received by the British government officials.” This is encouraging, along with the meetings with civil society on Women, Peace and Security listed in the 2015 Report to

Parliament in Myanmar. However, a more concerted effort should be undertaken by all UK embassies in the NAP countries and other conflict-affected countries to regularly consult with civil society in a way that is accessible, useful and strategically timed. Once established, this ongoing dialogue would act as a significant resource for ensuring the relevance of the NAP, particularly in fragile contexts where levels of security and need can alter rapidly and at short notice.

Ongoing dialogues should also include clear information on the steps the UK is taking to implement recommendations. One GAPS survey respondent from Myanmar noted that “after the consultation meeting on 14 June 2015, there was not any other consultation or meeting again. We didn't know clearly how the UK government implement[ed] the Nation Action Plan on 1325, [or] how they coordinate with the government on this issue”, while a respondent from Afghanistan noted, “the local embassy contacts us to get our ideas about current developments in the country such as the elections or similar national issues, but we are not sure the extent to which they use our observations and inputs in informing their NAP.”

In order to ensure adequate capacity for such ongoing dialogue with local groups, GAPS recommends the appointment of dedicated Women, Peace and Security desk officers and training programmes in all UK embassies in fragile and conflict-affected countries. To ensure local to global reporting, such posts should be linked to named focal points in diplomatic missions to regional and global institutions.



As part of their response to the Syria regional crisis, World Vision conducts women's focus group discussions to identify the greatest needs and concerns of women and girls displaced by the violence.
©2014 World Vision / Mary Kate Maclsaac

The NAP reiterated the UK's readiness to lead on ensuring the effective coordination of efforts in its Women, Peace and Security focus countries. The UK should conduct regular in-country consultation with international donors, national government and regional actors so that combined resources and funds are used to realise NAP ambitions as effectively and efficiently as possible and without the risk of duplication. Consultation with national governments attempting to realise their own NAP commitments, often for the first time, is particularly important given the UK's commitment to the principle of host country ownership ■

2.3 Adaptation

It is essential that the NAP is seen as a 'living document' that can respond to changing dynamics at country level, new initiatives in the UK, and agreements at the international level. For example, at country level, the new activities to respond to the refugee crisis from Syria and other conflict-affected countries in 2015 should be reflected in the remaining two years of the NAP.

The agreement of the Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015 call for governments to take action to "achieve gender equality and empower women and girls" and "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels".⁷² These goals contains important targets for the Women, Peace and Security agenda, such

as "participation and equal opportunities in decision-making and leadership" and "the elimination of all forms of VAWG in the public and private spheres", which the UK government should fully integrate into the NAP activities.⁷³

Beyond reporting on these developments in annual Reports to Parliament, the NAP itself should be forward looking in integrating these issues into the remaining life-span of the NAP so that these areas are integrated into planning processes. While the evaluation provides some important reflections on whether the current NAP is 'fit for purpose', and importantly proposes that early action is taken to plan for the next NAP, which will start in 2017, efforts must be undertaken now to ensure the relevance of the current NAP can be increased, including through greater adaptability. Consultation with local civil society groups and dialogue with UK embassies should be central to this.

GAPS would like to see the UK government establish an accessible, online reporting platform on NAP implementation progress, which is regularly updated with emerging activities. Country sections in particular would benefit greatly from more regular reporting building on the UK government's Human Rights and Democracy Report, which includes one in-year update.⁷⁴

In addition to ensuring that the NAP is able to adapt to changing dynamics at all levels, DFID, FCO and MoD plans should also adapt to reflect the priorities in the NAP and ensure alignment with departmental strategies. This is highlighted in the NAP evaluation, which stresses the importance of institutionalising Women, Peace and Security concerns within departmental strategies ■⁷⁵

2.4 UK coordination and leadership roles

GAPS welcomed the appointment of the Rt Hon Baroness Anelay of St Johns DBE as the dedicated ministerial lead on Women, Peace and Security in the FCO in July 2015. The minister's earlier appointment as the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict in June 2015 was also welcome to ensure the longevity of this campaign.⁷⁶ Holding both of these responsibilities provides the minister with an opportunity to support a more integrated approach to Women, Peace and Security and PSVI and to ensure that efforts to build accountability for sexual violence are effectively situated within wider efforts to prevent all forms of violence against women and girls in conflict-affected countries, alongside greater political rights and representation for women and girls. This opportunity and wider potential for a stronger Women, Peace and Security approach under the minister's leadership requires a dedicated budget to support the implementation of initiatives at a ministerial level.

GAPS welcomed the attendance of the Secretaries of State for all three lead Women, Peace and Security departments at the launch of the UK's 2014-2017 NAP in June 2014. GAPS also welcomes the increased coordination demonstrated at a tri-departmental event on the High-level Review in September 2015, where Baroness Anelay, Baroness Verma of Leicester (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development and Champion for tackling VAW overseas) and General Messenger (Deputy Chief of Defence Staff and MoD Military Champion for Women, Peace and Security and PSVI) highlighted some key progress within their departments and renewed the UK's commitment to the Women, Peace and Security agenda. GAPS strongly supports the coordination of a fortnightly cross-Whitehall group⁷⁷ on Women, Peace and Security that brings together FCO, DFID, MoD and Stabilisation Unit officials (in addition to the new MoD Senior-level Steering Group on Women, Peace and Security)⁷⁸ and recommends further coordination between the ministerial Champions to drive the Women, Peace and Security agenda at a high level. This includes action within departments to ensure, inter alia, that Women, Peace and Security is not exclusively the concern of ministerial Champions. Additionally, GAPS strongly recommends that any UK minister travelling to any fragile and conflict-affected country receive a briefing from in-country civil society and women's groups working on Women, Peace and Security.

GAPS also calls for greater UK internal leadership on Women, Peace and Security by appointing a Women, Peace and Security lead within the National Security Council (NSC). This would support the UK's commitments to 'mainstream' Women, Peace and Security by ensuring that it is considered at the highest of its decision-making levels in peace and security and would further ensure a greater provision of funding through the consideration of

Women, Peace and Security in setting budget priorities for the UK's CSSF.

Further engagement needs to be extended to the Northern Ireland Office as GAPS has previously recommended, in line with calls from many women's organisations in Northern Ireland, and CEDAW Committee Recommendations in 2009 and 2013.⁷⁹ This engagement should be documented within UK reporting mechanisms such as the Report to Parliament on the NAP in order to ensure that the women of Northern Ireland are not excluded from the important benefits that inclusion in the UK NAP would afford them ■

2.5 M&E and UK Accountability

Monitoring the impact of its Women, Peace and Security objectives and activities should be a priority for the UK government. GAPS continues to urge the government to develop and publish indicators that are based on outcomes to support the measurement of progress against its own objectives.

The 'high-level indicators' vary widely in their appropriateness for outcomes and measurability. For example, "Hours of training per capita of decision-making personnel in security and justice sector institutions to address cases of sexual and gender-based violence"⁸⁰ does not indicate the quality or content of training and also does not necessarily contribute to the actual outcome that "Women's and girls' safety, physical and mental health and economic security are assured and their human rights upheld in conflict and post-conflict situations". A more appropriate indicator would therefore be one that, for example, measured the safety of women and girls in conflict-affected countries, alongside indicators measuring the number of UK-funded projects that successfully met objectives around improving women's and girls' safety. GAPS recommends general clarification of M&E terms (i.e. outcomes, objectives, outputs and indicators) as the NAP is reviewed and plans emerge for the post-2017 NAP, as well as clearer articulation of the government's specific Women, Peace and Security objectives.

Clearer, more specific objectives with set indicators would provide a more efficient framework of accountability in the UK, not only through the UK's annual Report to Parliament, but also in terms of reporting on ODA and other spends for which it should be open, transparent and accountable to the UK taxpayer. As mentioned in section 2.1, accountability for Women, Peace and Security spending would also be greatly supported by an effective marker system. These standards should be set for medium and long-term efforts as well as more short-term efforts. GAPS also calls for the UK government to commit to a specific date for annual reporting to Parliament on the UK NAP in order to ensure transparency.

The Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative has achieved much that is to be applauded but the lack of

clear objectives both overall and for specific activities such as the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict (June 2014) make it difficult to gauge its cost-effectiveness in relation to achievements over the past year. A 'Summit Report' published after the summit in December 2014 states that "the Summit was an opportunity to reflect on progress achieved so far and to identify what further practical actions by governments and other participants are needed to deliver fundamental and long-lasting change on the ground".⁸¹ Yet there is no global accountability framework in place to monitor progress against country commitments.

GAPS welcomes the establishment of the House of Lords' Select Committee on Sexual Violence in Conflict,⁸² and looks forward to its final recommendations in March 2016. In line with the 2015 NAP evaluation, GAPS recommends the UK government conducts its own review to ensure that PSVI is fully embedded in UK responses, complements wider policy, meets specific country needs and maximises its impact.⁸³

GAPS further recommends that the UK government should incorporate the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) into its Women, Peace and Security policy and implementation ■⁸⁴

Country profiles

As part of the in-country survey, GAPS asked civil society organisations operating in the NAP focus countries what events or processes they are prioritising in the coming year that are relevant to the Women, Peace

and Security agenda. The headlines suggested by respondents are listed below, alongside priorities identified in recent consultations and from GAPS member organisations. Please note that these are not exhaustive, and do

not necessarily reflect the views of every GAPS member organisation or every one of the organisations that took part in the country-level survey:

Afghanistan

- Supporting women to participate in sub-national and grassroots-level peace talks as well as wider social leadership positions;
- Raising Women, Peace and Security at national and international events related to women and peace;
- Using media to raise awareness about the importance of women's participation in all peace processes; campaigns for more inclusive peace planning.

Challenges include:

- Shortage of resources;
- General insecurity, in particular the lack of security measures for women activists;
- Conservative and patriarchal social norms.



↑ A protest by members of the Afghan Women's Network ©AWN

DRC

- Support for women to put themselves forward as candidates at all levels including in the 2016 elections;
- Working to highlight the needs of women in villages and rural areas;
- Promote cross-border dialogue between Burundi and the DRC with women's participation at its heart;
- Support to local organisations working on Women, Peace and Security to participate in local and national events, participation in regional (e.g. AU) and international conferences, and establish information networks;
- Improvements to the DRC's own NAP, including national-level monitoring, refreshing of activities, strengthening, raising awareness and dissemination.

Challenges include:

- The short-term nature of funding to local organisations;
- General insecurity, including insufficient protection for women human rights defenders; additionally, the issue of safety in villages acts as barrier to women's participation in meetings;
- Unstable political context and low political will;
- Lack of information and challenges in sharing the information needed to support women's organisations to participate in planning activities.

Libya

- A road map of the disarmament of militias in Libya;
- Developing a National Action Plan with inputs from women's rights organisations, and working together on implementation;
- Supporting and empowering grassroots initiatives;
- Building the capacity of civil society groups to enable them to mobilise and lobby for peace; gender equality and the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination to be the main components of the NAP;

- Raising the capacity of women's groups through training;
- Research on what has worked in the promotion of Women, Peace and Security in the Libyan context, and what has failed.

Challenges include:

- Security and the spread of arms;
- Need for coordination mechanisms;
- Regressive armed militias, which block progress on women's rights and their political allies.

Myanmar

- Focus on increasing the participation of women in the peace process;
- Supporting the NAP development process, ensuring that women's rights groups of all ethnicities are able to participate;
- Implementation of the national strategic plan for the advancement of women, which covers the period 2013-22 and identifies 12 priority areas to achieve gender equality including violence against women and decision making;

- Need to build the capacity of implementing organisations, cooperation and networking between CSOs and encouraging joint advocacy.

Challenges include:

- Conflict between ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) and the Government military – EAO group leaders agree on a 30 per cent quota for women's participation in the peace process, however this is not supported by the government;
- Lack of service provision for survivors of sexual violence, including legal and security services.



← Layla, 23, fled the Mogadishu conflict with her husband and 5 children and has now found safety in a World Vision-supported IDP in Puntland, Somalia.
©2011 Jon Warren/World Vision



↑ Farshidheh and Zainab (15) have missed almost two years of school in Syria and one year of school in Jordan. But Zainab and Faschal, who shared a desk in their school in Syria, did not want to give up. They met with other Syrian refugee girls and their mothers in their neighbourhood and came up with an idea. They rented their own small bus.
© CARE/Johanna Mitscherlich 2013

Somalia

- Developing a NAP on Women, Peace and Security;
- Protection of women human rights defenders, advocacy around the implementation of the National Gender Policy;
- Advocacy for the enactment of the Women's Quota at the National House of Representatives;
- The enactment of the Sexual Offenses Bill as well as divorce rights;
- Increasing women's participation in local governance structures and peacebuilding mechanisms and linking grassroots advocacy to national processes;
- Promotion of mechanisms enabling women's participation in peace and security such as developing a women's political quota;
- Nationwide campaigns against gender-based violence and female genital mutilation.
- Limited access to some areas;
- Conservative cultural and political systems;
- Poor representation of women in the national decision-making process;
- Scarcity of active coordination for promoting women's initiatives;
- Threats to personal safety;
- Lack of good government and reliable administration;
- Reluctance of traditional leaders to support the Women, Peace and Security agenda;
- Need for technical assistance.

Challenges include:

- Lack of financial support is a major challenge; additionally, funding should reflect the administrative diversity of Somalia/Somaliland;

Syria

- Strengthening participation of women and girls in crisis-affected communities in needs assessments, programme design, implementation and monitoring of humanitarian programming – this should include engaging with local women's organisations and conducting community consultations;
- Ensuring donors to the Syrian crisis adjust their counter-terror policies to enable life-saving aid to reach those in need, including women and girls in areas under the control of proscribed armed groups;
- Supporting the deployment of gender advisors and GBV specialists to all affected countries and hold agencies accountable for gender-sensitive programming;
- Supporting neighbouring states to keep their borders open and provide legal documents (including residency) and visas for women's rights activists to enable their work, as well as for Syrian female refugees, who are more likely to lack basic documentation than men;
- Increasing resettlement for the most vulnerable Syrian refugees, in particular those identified through UNHCR's vulnerability criteria, including survivors of trauma or torture, and refugees at a heightened risk of sexual exploitation and abuse;
- Empowering women in refugee camps including through education as well as refugees who have fled to other countries.

Challenges include:

- Limited information;
- Lack of consultation;
- Lack of confidence between women refugees and donors.

Recommendations

Recommendations to the UK Government on Women, Peace and Security in 2016

[1] Affirm that comprehensive action across the Women, Peace and Security agenda is a UK government priority, with women's human rights at its core.

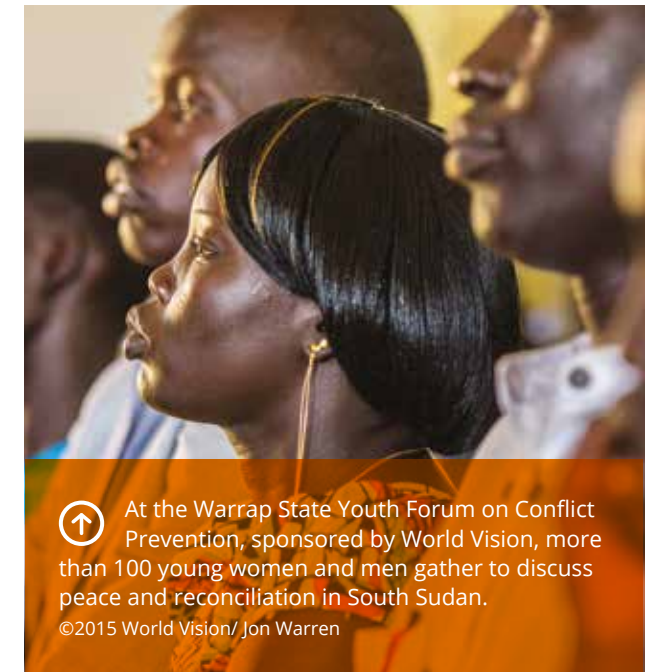
- Drive the political agenda at a high level through further coordination between DFID, MoD and FCO ministerial Women, Peace and Security Champions and a Women, Peace and Security lead on the National Security Council.
- Commit to ensure all FCO, DFID and MoD ministers travelling to any fragile and conflict-affected country receive a briefing from civil society and women's rights organisations on locally-relevant Women, Peace and Security issues.
- Better promote a comprehensive approach across the pillars of 1325 to advance the rights of women and girls by addressing the root causes of violence against women and girls and their marginalisation from peacebuilding rather than simply addressing the symptoms, and by taking an intersectional approach that recognises marginalised groups such as girls and widows.
- Ratify the Istanbul Convention to demonstrate ongoing commitment and leadership to respond to violence against women and girls.
- Take further steps to monitor the risks that WHRDs face in all focus countries and provide regular information through the NAP reporting mechanisms on the actions that have been taken by embassies to engage with local/national women's rights organisations to support their work.
- Ensure that commitment to the development of gender-sensitive early warning indicators by September 2016 advances a context-specific approach and is complemented by long term efforts towards conflict prevention.
- Better integrate DFID's Theory of Change on VAWG to deliver a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of all forms of gender-based violence and violence against women and girls.
- Work with other governments to achieve concrete gains for gender equality and action on GBV in emergencies at the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016, including by strengthening accountability mechanisms.
- Ensure that activities with men and boys transform social norms that equate power with manhood and masculinity, particularly in civilian and military institutions.



↑ Three sisters sit outside their tent in the Bekaa valley, where they live with their mother after they fled from Syria.
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[2] Ensure the meaningful participation of women from conflict-affected contexts in all related UK-hosted peace, security and development talks, and call for women's meaningful engagement in those hosted by other countries.

- Guarantee women's meaningful participation in any peace, security and development events hosted on British soil.
- Commit to supporting women's leadership and meaningful participation in all international and regional peace and security meetings, peace negotiations and donor conferences, and associated consultations, by providing UK financial and diplomatic support to women's rights organisations from conflict-affected states (women should comprise at least 30 per cent of delegates in decision-making processes).
- Provide support to the six UK NAP focus countries to develop and/or implement their own costed and funded National Action Plans, which will include a technical focus on creating spaces for women's full and meaningful participation in their design, ongoing review and revision, and UK funding to facilitate such participation by local civil society organisations and women's rights groups.



↑ At the Warrap State Youth Forum on Conflict Prevention, sponsored by World Vision, more than 100 young women and men gather to discuss peace and reconciliation in South Sudan.
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[3] Guarantee that the UK's Women, Peace and Security plans can be resourced and implemented – earmarking finances for this agenda, tracking spending via gender markers in wider development, humanitarian and stabilisation funding, and with a dedicated budget for the NAP.

- Commit earmarked funding to UK Women, Peace and Security activities, with a clear and transparent budget for all four pillars of the NAP.
- Commit to the use of gender markers (building on OECD and IASC markers) to better track Women, Peace and Security spending. The UK should commit to upholding the UN target of a minimum of 15 per cent of peacebuilding spending dedicated to furthering women's empowerment and gender equality and should provide long-term funding support to women's rights organisations via the roll-out of accessible funding streams for grassroots organisations.
- Examine and publish findings on the impact of earmarking at least 15 per cent of ODA channelled to crisis and conflict contexts to support women's needs and further gender equality.
- Pledge further funding for the Global Acceleration instrument, beyond the UK's start-up contribution of \$1m USD.
- Ensure that the new ODA crisis reserve funding includes a focus on gender equality and GBV stand-alone programming and mainstreaming, as well as the deployment of gender-based violence and gender advisors to support coordination efforts.
- Establish a separate budget for ministerial Champions for Women, Peace and Security.

[4] Guarantee consultation with women's rights organisations and local civil society in the design and review of UK Women, Peace and Security objectives (in line with existing commitments) and ensure that the views of women and their reflections on new and emerging issues such as the refugee crisis are integrated in UK government planning.

- Consult with UK civil society and priority country civil society in advance of each NAP annual report via workshops in each of the NAP focus countries, and ensure that this is an ongoing dialogue as part of planning processes.
- Develop a communications and outreach strategy in each of the priority countries that is tailored to the capacities of local civil society.
- Announce dedicated capacity for Women, Peace and Security in all UK embassies in fragile and conflict-affected countries in order to support outreach with local civil society, as well as dedicated capacity for Women, Peace and Security in diplomatic missions to regional and global institutions.
- Conduct regular in-country consultation with international donors, national government and regional actors so that combined resources and funds are used to realise NAP ambitions as effectively and efficiently as possible and without the risk of duplication.

[5] Commit to strengthen transparency with an open book on the UK's progress against Women, Peace and Security commitments including clear monitoring and reporting processes.

- Commit to a concrete date for the 2016 Report to Parliament on the UK NAP to enhance transparency to the UK parliament and civil society.
- Undertake a comprehensive review of the PSVI, including voices from local groups in conflict-affected countries.
- Enhance accountability by making objectives more specific, with set indicators, and ensure 2016 annual reporting provides greater clarity on progress against these objectives.
- Establish an accessible, online reporting platform on NAP implementation progress, which is regularly updated.



← Shereen [not her real name], 17, (right), assists a Syrian woman at a CARE-supported distribution in a town in southern Turkey. Shereen is also a Syrian refugee, but helps CARE as an information volunteer who assists at distributions and raises awareness in the community on important and sometimes sensitive issues such as gender-based violence and early marriage, as well as hygiene promotion. CARE has been responding across 50 villages in two districts of southern Turkey, providing emergency aid including blankets and hygiene kits, as well as vouchers and training of information volunteers for awareness raising.
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12. UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2014-2017), p2.
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Front cover: © Gender Action for Peace and Security

Back cover: Alifa, married to Nabi Ibrahim, chats with family outside the store front where they settled after fleeing Kobane last autumn. Three families, a total of 19 people, live in the small space. In the autumn, an estimated 194,000 Syrian refugees fled northern Aleppo governorate, into Turkey, where the UN reports there are at least 1.7 million refugees from Syria. CARE has been responding across 50 villages in two districts of southern Turkey, providing emergency aid including blankets and hygiene kits, as well as vouchers and training of information volunteers for awareness raising. © CARE/Mary Kate MacIsaac 2015

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