



Working to prevent violent conflict

BRIEFING

Leading the way on gender, peace and security Saferworld submission to GAPS UK on strengthening the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, November 2011

The UK Government is widely considered to be one of the leading champions of the women, peace and security agenda on the international stage. Saferworld welcomes the UK Government's decision to consult with civil society on its annual review of the *UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security* (NAP). The updated NAP published in 2010 represents a significant improvement on the previous plan, and the annual review process represents an important opportunity to further strengthen the UK's strategy for action on gender, peace and security.

Summary of key recommendations

As it undertakes its annual review of the NAP, Saferworld recommends that the UK Government should:

Taking a 'gender perspective'

- clearly define what is meant by terms such as 'gender perspective' and 'gender mainstreaming', in order to make it clear what action is expected to fulfil the NAP's objectives
- ensure that 'gender' is not considered to be synonymous with women and girls, by including consideration of the role of men and masculinities in peace and security issues

Linking the NAP with other Government plans and strategies

- incorporate gender, peace and security considerations into other Government strategies and plans, such as the forthcoming implementation plan for the *Building Stability Overseas Strategy*
- seek to institute a culture within government departments in which gender is routinely considered in work on conflict, peace and security, and ensure all officials working on conflict issues - not just those with a gender focus in their brief - receive adequate training on gender
- demonstrate the UK's commitment to women's participation in decision-making by promoting more women to senior positions within the UK Government to work on conflict issues

Combating gender-based violence overseas

- seek to address the social, political and economic causes of gender-based violence (GBV) as well as addressing the symptoms
- use its position as a world leader on security and justice programming to share knowledge and spread best practice on tackling GBV through developing more responsive, effective and accountable security and justice systems
- put those most affected by GBV at the heart of efforts to eliminate it, for example by empowering women and women's organisations to hold governments to account for their efforts to tackle GBV
- monitor and evaluate all of its security and justice programming for its effectiveness in tackling GBV
- consider how measures to tackle GBV can also help tackle GBV against men and boys, and support male victims/survivors

Bilateral action on women, peace and security

- consult with all relevant stakeholders in the country concerned as it develops the plans for bilateral action contained in the NAP

Developing monitoring and evaluation in the NAP

- develop indicators in the NAP which monitor and evaluate the impact of actions taken as well as their immediate outputs.

What is a 'gender perspective'?

"Most people in the UN system, especially on the security side, aren't quite sure they know what gender is, but they know someone believes it is supposed to have something to do with them, the work they do or the way they behave... Most people... assume that "gender mainstreaming" simply means hiring more women."¹

Dr Carol Cohn, Director of the Boston Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights

The NAP contains several references to mainstreaming "gender considerations", supporting a "gender focus", taking a "gender perspective" and so on. Clearly, in implementing these commitments and, importantly, evaluating the effectiveness of their implementation, it is vital to have a clear working definition of what these terms mean.

This question is far from being merely academic, yet it is a common omission from national action plans on women, peace and security.² Ideas about what is meant by taking a gender perspective are highly contested, including among civil society actors campaigning on these issues. While some ambiguity as to the meaning and implications of the commitment made in 1325 to "adopt a gender perspective" may have helped to gain broad support for the principle, a lack of clarity can result in confusion over how best to implement it.

UNSCR 1325 itself lists a number of the activities which might be deemed important as a result of incorporating a gender perspective into strategic planning.³ However, in order to decide what activities and considerations are needed in any given context, it is necessary to understand what it means to take a gender perspective-what questions must be asked, of whom, and why? For example:

- How do conflict and peacebuilding impact differently upon on women, men, boys and girls?
- How do women, men, boys and girls experience conflict and insecurity differently?
- How do conflict and peacebuilding impact on gender roles and the relationships between women, men, boys and girls?
- How do ideas about gender roles impact on conflict and peacebuilding?
- Do men and women participate differently in conflict or in peacebuilding processes?
- What different needs do women, men, boys and girls have in conflict situations or peacebuilding processes?

This list is far from exhaustive, but serves to illustrate that taking a gender perspective entails asking a wide range of questions which include but also go beyond the topics of sexual violence and women's participation in peace processes, which are often the main focus of gender, peace and security initiatives. Of course, these broader questions can and should be asked about a wide range of situations and processes in conflict and post-conflict settings, including peace negotiations; disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes; security sector reform; and transitional justice processes, to name a few.

It is important to note that taking a gender perspective is not just about promoting women's rights. It is common for the word 'gender' to be understood as synonymous with 'women', but this means that often only half of the story is told. While UNSCR 1325 describes itself as addressing "women, peace and security", any gender analysis which excludes consideration of men *as men* risks obscuring important details.

For example, in Yemen owning a gun is considered an integral part of being a man, and is a rite of passage for young men. This close association between masculinity and gun ownership has no doubt

¹ Felicity Hill, Carol Cohn and Cynthia Enloe, *UN Security Council Resolution 1325 Three Years On: Gender, Security and Organisational Change* (2004), Boston Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights, <http://www.genderandsecurity.umb.edu/HCE.pdf>, p 9.

² For a list of and links to all existing national action plans, see <http://www.peacewomen.org/pages/about-1325/national-action-plans-naps>

³ These are addressing "the special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction; measures that support local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution, and that involve women in all of the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreements; measures that ensure the protection of and respect for human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary."

contributed to Yemenis becoming the second most heavily armed population in the world. The widespread availability of weapons among the young male population has meant that small disputes can rapidly escalate into violent conflicts. Any programme of civilian disarmament which ignores this cultural association between arms and gender roles is unlikely to have much success.

Considering men and ideas about masculinity is also vitally important to addressing women's lack of participation in public life and political processes. Empowering women and building their capacity for engaging in politics is of great importance, but it should also be remembered that social and cultural norms which work against gender equality cannot be addressed without working to change the attitudes and behaviours of men.

Saferworld therefore recommends that, given the commitment set out in UNSCR 1325 to take a "gender perspective" on peace and security issues, the UK NAP should address not just 'women, peace and security' but 'gender, peace and security'.

Linking the NAP with other Government plans and strategies

Saferworld believes that gender considerations should not be treated as a separate stream of work within processes and institutions working on peace and security issues, but rather should be a consideration for all those working on peace and security issues. We therefore welcome the Government's commitment in the NAP to ensure that "all staff working on conflict issues across FCO, MoD and DfID departments are aware of the women, peace and security agenda and receive specialist training, when appropriate" and to aim for "greater integration of gender into UK development, defence and diplomatic activity".

The Government's *Building Stability Overseas Strategy* (BSOS) represents the first cross-departmental strategy for preventing conflict overseas, and Saferworld welcomes the reference to the NAP in the BSOS.⁴ Saferworld understands that the Government is now producing a detailed implementation plan for the BSOS, to be finalised by the end of 2011. It is important that gender considerations are mainstreamed throughout this plan and its implementation.

To take just one example, the BSOS rightly states that "context is everything"⁵ and commits to introducing a new cross-government strategic conflict assessment which will "bring together political, economic, social and security analysis" to "identify the situation-specific interventions that will be most likely to succeed in helping to prevent conflict and build stability."⁶ It is important that this conflict analysis process routinely includes a gender perspective, given the drastic differences in gender relations in different contexts, but also the differences in the way gender relations interact with conflict and security dynamics. Incorporating the views of both women and men in communities affected by conflict into strategic conflict assessments would be an important means of doing this.

In addition to the BSOS, gender considerations should be incorporated into all strategies and operations relating to conflict and security. This should be seen as part of a process of instituting a culture within government departments in which gender is considered an important factor in conflict, peace and security. This can also be pursued through ensuring that all government officials working on conflict issues – not just those with a gender focus in their brief – receive adequate training on gender as a matter of course. Getting officials in senior positions – and especially men – to promote the importance of including a gender focus can help to demonstrate that it is not a mere marginal concern, nor one that is the sole domain of women.

UNSCR 1325 urges UN member states to "ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict", and it is important to remember that this applies at home as well as abroad. By increasing the number of women working on conflict and security issues within the

⁴ HMG *Building Stability Overseas Strategy*, p 26. For Saferworld's initial response to the BSOS, please see *Saferworld response to the Building Stability Overseas Strategy* (2011), <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/smartweb/resources/view-resource/563>.

⁵ Ibid. p 34.

⁶ Ibid. p 26.

UK Government - particularly in senior positions and in roles which focus on 'hard security' and the military, which tend to be male-dominated – the UK can demonstrate by example the importance and impact of women's participation in decision-making on peace and security issues.

Combating gender-based violence overseas

Gender-based violence (GBV) is both a cause and a result of gender inequality; it results from entrenched social attitudes toward the roles of men and women, but it can also reinforce inequality by preventing women and girls from accessing education, health services, employment and other means of meeting their basic needs. Efforts to prevent gender-based violence should therefore include measures to improve women's economic independence and support for communities and civil society organisations in challenging the social and cultural norms which underpin much GBV - working with men and boys as well as women and girls.

It is important to remember that women and girls are not the only victims/survivors of GBV. Rape has been used against men in conflict situations as a means of undermining their masculinity in the eyes of their communities, bringing shame which relates directly to beliefs about gender.⁷ Like female victims/survivors, male victims/survivors suffer from social stigma as well as physical and mental health problems as a result, though these are experienced differently by women, men, boys and girls. The full extent of the problem is unknown because relatively little research has been conducted on this topic compared to sexual violence against women in conflict. As a result of this lack of information, relatively few support services exist for male victims/survivors. Saferworld recommends that the UK Government consider, as part of this review, how the measures contained in the NAP to help eliminate GBV and support victims/survivors address this issue.

In many countries, security and justice providers such as the police, law courts, armed forces and non-state security and justice providers such as informal and traditional justice mechanisms (often joined by militias and private security companies) not only fail in their duty to prevent and support victims/survivors of GBV but themselves violate and perpetuate impunity. This may be exacerbated by discriminatory laws which do not criminalise GBV as offences; prejudiced investigators who do not treat GBV seriously, or lack the appropriate skills or procedures to do so; or low reporting rates as people do not trust the police, or fear public shame or humiliation. In conflict, post-conflict and fragile states, state provision of security and justice is often particularly weak, and women's access to them particularly difficult.

While Saferworld acknowledges that there are important social and economic factors which also need to be addressed in order to prevent GBV, our comments here focus upon security and justice programming – an area in which we believe the UK enjoys a comparative advantage. The UK has been called a 'market leader' in supporting the development of security and justice systems overseas (for example, by the 2008 Global Conflict Prevention Pool SSR Strategy Review) and has supported numerous security sector reform processes, backed up by a network of experienced practitioners, including officials across several departments and a mix of consultants, non-governmental organisations and academics. This is not to say there is not room for improvement in the UK's security and justice work; however, as a leader in the field, the UK should share best practice and technical expertise on security and justice with international partners, in order for its knowledge and experience to have the greatest possible impact.

It is important to recognise that women, men, boys and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations are particularly likely to experience GBV; therefore efforts to prevent and resolve conflict are a crucial component of preventing GBV. Effective security and justice sectors which are able to meet people's security needs are vital to preventing conflict, and ineffective or oppressive ones may even be drivers of insecurity themselves. Therefore, building effective, responsive security and justice services can not only help to tackle GBV directly but also prevent conflict, thereby indirectly reducing the risk of GBV in the future.

Integrating a gender perspective into security and justice programming can help to improve local

⁷ For a summary of evidence, see Lara Stemple, 'Male Rape and Human Rights' in *Hastings Law Journal*, vol 60:605 (2009), pp 611-615.

ownership, gain the trust of civilians, increase accountability and oversight, and improve compliance with international and regional laws, instruments and norms, as well as delivering more effective security and justice. However, despite the increased recognition of the importance of gender in security and justice programming, implementation has been weak.

When reforming security and justice services to better tackle GBV, change must be driven by those closest to the violence, who are best placed to define their security needs. Transparency and accountability are key to this process, and it is important that women should be viewed not just as victims but as agents of change who should play a central role in addressing GBV and building peace.

In order to most effectively address GBV, security and justice programmes should:

- **be context-specific:** informed by detailed analysis of the particular context, assessing the needs of all stakeholders and looking at the conflict dynamics that exist between different groups. If analysis focuses predominantly on elites, it will often reflect male experience and tend to overlook women's needs and concerns
- **empower women:** recruiting women to positions where they are involved in making decisions on and delivering security and justice services can help to ensure they meet women's needs; for example, increasing numbers of female police officers seems to encourage women to report crime. Increasing the number of women in policy-making roles, such as within government and political parties, can also contribute to reducing GBV. But recruitment of women alone will not address discrimination and abuse; this requires specifically trained women and men. Men can also be 'gender champions'; indeed, enlisting men in senior, high profile positions is crucial to demonstrating that GBV is not just a 'women's issue'
- **balance supply with demand:** as well as looking at the institutions which provide security and justice (the 'supply' side), encouraging and empowering civil society groups and communities to become involved in the decision-making and oversight of how locally-defined solutions to their problems are delivered (the 'demand' side) considerably improves effectiveness
- **tackle impunity:** dealing effectively with officials from security and justice services who have themselves committed abuses, strengthening complaints and disciplinary mechanisms and internal and external oversight. Improving professionalism and practice are vital to restoring and maintaining public trust in security and justice systems
- **address GBV through 'mainstream' security and justice:** gender perspectives must be integrated throughout security and justice programming. Although there is a need for targeted initiatives to tackle GBV, it is crucial to avoid treating gender as an issue separate from all others, thus potentially marginalising victims/survivors of GBV further
- **monitor impact:** All security and justice programmes should be monitored and evaluated throughout the programme cycle for how well they address GBV, to ensure value for money and maximum impact

Bilateral action on women, peace and security

Saferworld welcomes the Government's decision to operationalise its bilateral action in support of 1325 through bilateral plans for priority countries. In co-operation with GAPS, Saferworld organised a focus group on the bilateral section of the NAP, which produced detailed recommendations for how this section of the plan could be developed. We therefore limit our comments here to a discussion of the bilateral plan for Nepal, informed by Saferworld's programme work in that country.

Saferworld contributes and supports the Nepal NAP in a number of ways. For example, Saferworld evidence-based recommendations on integration and rehabilitation of women and men combatants were included in the NAP; and, Saferworld is currently conducting a needs assessment for the Government of Nepal to assess its capacity to implement the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) section of the Nepali NAP which will then inform the development of an M&E plan, with the support of the FCO's Human Rights and Democracy Fund.

A recent focus group conducted by Saferworld in Kathmandu involving participants from the UK Government, Government of Nepal and Nepali civil society revealed that the UK's bilateral plan for Nepal was developed without consultation with Nepali stakeholders.⁸ Saferworld recommends that, in line with the recommendations produced in that focus group, the UK Government consults with all relevant stakeholders in the country concerned as it develops the bilateral plans contained in the NAP.

Where a country already has its own NAP, such as in the case of Nepal, Saferworld broadly supports the recommendation of the Kathmandu focus group that the UK should focus its bilateral action on supporting the implementation of the country's own NAP. However, in cases where the country's NAP is weak, support may be needed to further develop that NAP or support activities which are not currently contained within it. In countries where the state is or has recently been an active party to a conflict, there is an increased likelihood that the state may not have the needs of its whole population at heart. In such cases, aligning UK support with state-owned strategies and plans may risk doing harm if it contributed to the marginalisation of sections of the population, and the UK should prioritise alignment with the needs of marginalised communities and community members.

In countries which do not have their own NAP, Saferworld supports the recommendation of the Kathmandu focus group that the UK's objective should be to support the development of a NAP. However, there may be countries where the government is not interested in producing a NAP but where support for work on gender, peace and security is badly needed. In such cases, a plan for bilateral support may be drawn up with broad consultation among relevant stakeholders in country.

Developing monitoring and evaluation in the NAP

Monitoring and evaluation are vital aspects of any action plan, as the UK Government has recognised with its increased emphasis on measuring the impact of its international development programming. If the NAP is to be effective, it is crucial that it contains strong performance indicators and that resources are made available for rigorous monitoring and evaluation against them. Saferworld welcomes the inclusion in the current NAP of indicators assigned to specific responsible departments. However, there is considerable room for improvement of these indicators as part of the annual review.

The indicators in the NAP currently focus largely on the immediate outputs of the actions specified in the NAP; however, they do not go on to measure the impacts of the actions.

For example, the indicator for a commitment to appoint a "Senior Representative" to co-ordinate Government action on tackling violence against women overseas is "senior appointment made". However there is no indicator to assess whether the appointment of a senior representative has resulted in work to tackle violence against women overseas being better co-ordinated or receiving greater priority. Similarly, the indicator for a commitment to deploy cultural/gender advisers to work with UK military commanders is "number of cultural advisers deployed on operations", with no indicator to measure what difference their deployment makes to how well gender concerns are integrated into operations.

Measuring impact does not have to mean introducing overly ambitious indicators – indeed, performance indicators are more useful where they are realistic. Nor does it mean that impact must be demonstrated in the short term – often impact can only be measured over the long term, particularly when seeking to challenge longstanding cultural, social and political norms. However, if the Government does not measure how well the actions contained in the NAP achieve the desired impacts, it will not know whether the actions have been carried out effectively or, crucially, whether they were the right actions to take in order to achieve the NAP's objectives. Monitoring and evaluating impact would allow for continuous improvement of the NAP through learning from experience.

Saferworld understands that the Government is working with limited resources and that monitoring and evaluation can be costly processes. However, effective evaluation of impacts can improve value

⁸ Saferworld and GAPS, *Bilateral support for women, peace and security in Nepal: Narrative report of the Nepal focus group on the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security* (2011).

for money - a principle which the Government has acknowledged as being central to its approach to development.

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About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent, international NGO that works to prevent violent conflict and promote co-operative approaches to security. We believe everyone should be able to lead peaceful, fulfilling lives free from insecurity and armed violence.

Through our work in the Horn of Africa, South Asia and Eastern Europe we aim to understand what causes violence by talking to the people it affects and then bringing together communities, governments, civil society and the international community to develop solutions. Using this experience, we also work with the UK, EU, UN and others to develop ways of supporting societies address conflict and insecurity.

We always seek to work constructively with others and do not usually engage in public campaigning. While we are not a traditional development agency, we seek to understand and influence the relationship between conflict, security and international development.

We have over 80 staff based in London and abroad – with registered offices in Brussels, Colombo, Juba, Kampala, Nairobi and Pristina, and a permanent staff presence in most of the countries we work in. Our funding for 2008-2009 was around £4.7million – mainly in the form of government grants from Canada, the EU, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, Norway and the UK.