

Advancing gender, peace and security in the new UK National Action Plan

Saferworld submission to the UK Government on the redevelopment of the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, September 2013

Introduction

The UK Government has taken great steps to champion women, peace and security as a priority issue on the international agenda. Through its flagship policies such as the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative and Strategic Vision for Girls and Women, and through its pivotal role in achieving UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and related resolutions, the UK Government has demonstrated its policy commitment to helping women and girls affected by conflict, insecurity, and violence.

The UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP) provides the UK Government with a framework to implement UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions, to reduce the impact of conflict on women and girls, and promote their inclusion in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The redevelopment of the 2010–2013 NAP provides the UK Government with a valuable opportunity to strengthen its policy approach to women, peace and security, and its implementation. This submission aims to highlight some of the gaps between policy and practice in the UK's work on women, peace and security, and offers key recommendations for how the UK Government can fulfil its objective of ensuring the provisions of the UNSCRs are incorporated into all of its work on conflict issues.

Throughout this submission, Saferworld refers to 'gender, peace and security' as opposed to 'women, peace and security'. The objectives of the NAP, to address the impact of conflict on women and girls and their under-representation in conflict resolution, are crucial. Saferworld believes that in order to effectively achieve these objectives, it is necessary to consider the interaction between gender and conflict, and the implications this has for how we should think about conflict, security and opportunities for peace. See **Taking a 'gender perspective'** for further explanation.

Summary of recommendations

- Broaden the UK women, peace and security agenda to 'gender, peace and security', so that 'gender' is not considered synonymous with 'women' and the role of gender norms and identities in conflict and peacebuilding is accounted for, including the role of men and masculinities
- Fully implement commitments in the NAP on gender mainstreaming by developing and issuing guidance on how to incorporate gender considerations to all government officials working on conflict issues
- Monitor progress on how officials mainstream gender into development, defence, and diplomatic activity by making it part of their job descriptions and performance indicators
- Ensure gender considerations are mainstreamed in all UK policies, strategies, and operations relating to conflict, peace, and security, including the Building Stability Overseas Strategy
- Use a comprehensive training programme to create a culture within government departments that encourages officials to view gender considerations as an integral part of their work on peace and security
- Appoint senior officials to champion the importance of gender, peace and security within wider work on conflict issues
- Lead by example in demonstrating the importance of women's participation in peace and security issues by appointing more women to senior roles
- Mainstream gender considerations into UK engagement with all conflict-affected countries, not only those which have bilateral plans in the NAP
- Select countries for bilateral plans in the NAP according to where an additional level of transparency and oversight would most enhance implementation

- Regularly consult with in-country stakeholders, particularly with civil society, on the nature of the UK's support for gender, peace and security, particularly if other countries have or are developing their own NAPs
- Consult with civil society, government officials and other relevant stakeholders in all countries included in the NAP bilateral section to better inform the development and content of the 2014–2017 UK NAP
- When reporting annually to Parliament, report activity on gender, peace and security issues directly against the objectives and activities in the NAP, in order for monitoring and evaluation of the government's actions to be more meaningful
- Ensure that indicators in the NAP measure outcomes, and not outputs. Indicators should be realistic and account for both short and long-term impact.

Taking a 'gender perspective'

The UK NAP makes a number of commitments to "mainstreaming gender considerations" or "a gender perspective" into the UK's core working practices,¹ its programmes in conflict-affected countries, all conflict prevention activities and strategies, and all conflict training in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Department for International Development (DFID), Stabilisation Unit, and Ministry of Defence (MoD). The NAP, however, does not define or set out what the process of gender mainstreaming should look like. Saferworld notes that a lack of awareness and understanding of what taking a 'gender perspective' means to HMG has meant that the commitments to mainstream gender have not yet been met. Saferworld is also concerned that this lack of clarity risks government officials working on peace and security issues equating 'gender' with 'women and girls'.

Saferworld contends that the available evidence on gender and conflict supports a shift in focus from 'women, peace and security' toward a 'gender, peace and security' approach. Supporting women's rights and the full participation of women in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and all security related work is vital, and this objective should be maintained. However, to consider only the role of women in trying to understand gender dynamics does not necessarily provide a full picture; it is also necessary to analyse the role of gender norms and identities in driving conflict and insecurity, including considering the role of men from a gender perspective.

¹ UK Government (2012 revision), *UK Government National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 Women, Peace and Security*, p 5. The commitment to mainstream gender considerations into core working practices is under the heading of 'operations' which is defined in the NAP as UK development, defence, and diplomatic activity on page 20

Gender perspective: explained

A gender perspective should consider how conflict, insecurity, peacebuilding, and conflict prevention activities impact on and are influenced by women, men, girls, and boys and ideas about gender. A gender perspective, for instance, can be adopted to understand how expectations around masculinities can act as drivers of conflict and violence.

For example, in many parts of South Sudan, cattle raiding is a key cause of violence within and between communities. Participating in a cattle raid is a rite of passage for adolescent boys, marking their entry into manhood, and for men it is a symbol of masculinity and virility which confers social status. However, cattle raids often spark revenge attacks, provoking cycles of violence which can leave hundreds of people dead.

Women can also be instrumental in reinforcing the association between masculinity and cattle raiding. In Ikotos county in Eastern Equatoria, for example, women sing songs to shame men who have not gone on a cattle raid or who have failed to bring back cattle.² This gendered expectation is underpinned by the dowry system, in which a young man is expected to pay his bride's family in cattle in exchange for his prospective wife.

While a number of other causes lie behind the phenomenon of cattle raiding – including food insecurity, widespread unemployment, availability of weapons, and the absence of effective security forces – without taking a gender perspective in understanding these patterns of violence, any activity to address its root causes would have limited effect.

Being gender sensitive, therefore, does not simply mean including women and girls into existing processes but also reassessing any given process with a view to understanding how it affects and is affected by existing gender roles and norms. By doing so, the UK Government is better informed to plan and implement activities that meet its objectives around conflict prevention and gender equality, including those set out in the NAP.

Saferworld therefore recommends that the UK Government develops, and issues to officials, thorough guidance notes that set out what gender mainstreaming means, and what its practical implications might be. The guidance may include some of the following questions that officials should

² Small Arms Survey (2012), *Symptoms and causes: insecurity and underdevelopment in Eastern Equatoria*, (Geneva, HSBA), p 4 <http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/issue-briefs/HSBA-IB-16-symptoms-causes.pdf>; Kircher I (2013), *Challenges to security, livelihoods and gender justice in South Sudan* (Oxford, Oxfam GB), p 13 <http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/rr-challenges-security-livelihoods-gender-south-sudan-130313-en.pdf>

consider when planning NAP related activities in any given context:

- How does conflict / peacebuilding impact differently upon women, men, girls, and boys?
- How does conflict / peacebuilding affect existing gender norms and identities and the relationships between women, men, girls, and boys?
- How do women, men, girls, and boys participate in conflict / peacebuilding?
- How do gender norms and identities drive or perpetuate conflict and violence?
- How might gender norms and identities be used or adapted to promote peace?

While this list is far from exhaustive, it serves to demonstrate that a wide range of questions must be asked in order to take a gender perspective that seeks to understand the relationships between gender, conflict, peace, and security.³ These kinds of questions should also be asked about a broad range of conflict and security issues – beyond sexual violence in conflict – including but not limited to peace negotiations; disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration programmes; security sector reform; and transitional justice processes.

Recommendations to UK Government:

- Broaden the UK women, peace and security agenda to 'gender, peace and security', so that 'gender' is not considered synonymous with 'women' and the role of gender norms and identities in conflict and peacebuilding is accounted for, including the role of men and masculinities
- Fully implement commitments in the NAP on gender mainstreaming by developing and issuing guidance on how to incorporate gender considerations to all government officials working on conflict issues
- Monitor progress on how officials mainstream gender into development, defence, and diplomatic activity by making it part of their job descriptions and performance indicators.

Linking the NAP with other government strategies

Saferworld believes gender, peace and security should not be treated as a separate stream of work from peace and security issues or siloed in the NAP, but rather gender perspectives should be

mainstreamed into *all* of the UK's work in and on conflict-affected and fragile states.

For instance, the 2011 Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS) is the UK Government's policy framework to prevent conflict and address instability overseas, and it is also jointly owned by the MoD, FCO, and DFID. The three pillars of the BSOS are 'Early warning', 'Rapid crisis prevention and response', and 'Investing in upstream conflict prevention'. These pillars present significant areas of overlap with key NAP objectives, in particular the development of gender-sensitive early warning mechanisms, ensuring equal access to relief and recovery efforts, and implementing gender-sensitive conflict prevention activities. While the NAP is mentioned in the BSOS, as are commitments to addressing violence against women and supporting women's role in building peace, Saferworld believes the UK Government must mainstream a gender perspective into the BSOS and other related policy frameworks, in order to adopt a comprehensive and coordinated approach to achieving gender, peace and security objectives. The current status of gender considerations in the BSOS as 'the role of women' is too narrow and does not acknowledge the relevance of gender norms and identities to conflict and peacebuilding.

In addition to the BSOS, gender should be mainstreamed into the UK's conflict analysis methodology, known as the Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS), and into the Conflict Pool guidance, or its equivalent when the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund replaces the Conflict Pool in 2015. While gender sensitivity is included in the latter as something officials should consider when planning Conflict Pool programming,⁴ Saferworld thinks the requirement for gender sensitivity must be compulsory and systematic.

Saferworld believes that incorporating gender into all strategies and operations relating to conflict and security should form part of a wider culture within government departments in which gender is considered to be an important factor in conflict, peace and security, rather than an issue of secondary importance or a separate work stream. Comprehensive and ongoing training for all government officials working on conflict issues will be key to achieving this. The UK Government can support this culture shift by appointing both male and female senior officials in all three departments to champion the importance of gender mainstreaming, demonstrating that gender issues are not to be addressed solely by women. The UK can also lead by example on the participation element of the NAP by increasing the number of women working on conflict and security issues in the UK Government, particularly in parts commonly dominated by men,

³ A brief summary of the evidence on gender relations as drivers of conflict can be found in Brinkman H-J, Attree L and Hezi S (2013), *Addressing horizontal inequalities as drivers of conflict in the post-2015 development agenda* (London, Saferworld) <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/725>

⁴ UK Government (2013), *Conflict Pool Strategic Guidance*, p 8 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/200169/Conflict_Pool_Strategic_Guidance_FINAL.pdf

such as senior positions, the military, and peace delegations.⁵

Recommendations for the UK Government:

- Ensure gender considerations are mainstreamed in all UK policies, strategies, and operations relating to conflict, peace, and security, including the Building Stability Overseas Strategy
- Use a comprehensive training programme to create a culture within government departments that encourages officials to view gender considerations as an integral part of their work on peace and security
- Appoint senior officials to champion the importance of gender, peace and security within wider work on conflict issues
- Lead by example in demonstrating the importance of women's participation in peace and security issues by appointing more women to senior roles.

Bilateral support in the NAP

Saferworld believes gender perspectives should be mainstreamed into the UK's work in all of the conflict-affected and fragile states in which it works. We therefore recommend that the bilateral section of the NAP be used to enhance transparency around implementation in-country. The UK Government should use the bilateral section of the NAP as a basis for its annual reporting of activities, as this is important for accountability and external oversight of NAP implementation. The government's reporting on select countries, however, should reflect similar ongoing work on gender, peace and security in all countries where the UK is engaged on peace and conflict issues.

Saferworld also believes that the nature of the UK's support to other countries on gender, peace and security should be based upon the needs and perspectives of stakeholders in the countries concerned. In 2011 Saferworld and the UK Government held a workshop in Kathmandu, Nepal, to consult Nepali stakeholders on the process for reviewing the NAP's bilateral plan for Nepal. The discussion revealed that no consultation had taken place between the UK Government and Nepali Government and civil society on the decision to include Nepal in the bilateral section of the 2010–2013 NAP or the content of the section. The workshop also highlighted a strong desire among Nepali government officials and civil society to be

⁵ UN Women's sample of 31 major peace processes between 1992 and 2011 revealed that only 4 per cent of signatories, 2.4 per cent of chief mediators, 3.7 per cent of witnesses and 9 per cent of negotiators were women. See UN Women (2012), *Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence* <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Media/Publications/en/03AWomenPeaceNeg.pdf>

consulted on the content of the bilateral plan as and when it is reviewed.⁶ Saferworld strongly recommends that the UK Government conduct in-country consultations to inform the nature of its support to other countries on gender, peace and security; this is particularly useful in countries with existing or developing NAPs in order to coordinate activity and avoid duplication of efforts.

Saferworld is concerned that there are no plans for consultations in any of the countries in the new bilateral section of the NAP. By not including the perspectives of those the NAP intends to help – and particularly those of civil society organisations working on gender issues – the UK Government risks undermining the legitimacy and relevance of the 2014–2017 NAP. We therefore also recommend the UK Government addresses this issue by coordinating with in-country offices and conducting consultations with a range of stakeholders on how to effectively help other countries on their gender, peace and security agendas.

Recommendations for the UK Government:

- Mainstream gender considerations into UK engagement with all conflict-affected countries, not only those which have bilateral plans in the NAP
- Select countries for bilateral plans according to where an additional level of transparency and oversight would most enhance implementation
- Regularly consult with in-country stakeholders, particularly with civil society, on the nature of the UK's support for gender, peace and security, particularly in other countries have or are developing their own NAPs
- Consult with civil society, government officials, and other relevant stakeholders in all countries included in the NAP bilateral section to better inform the development and content of the 2014–2017 UK NAP.

Monitoring and evaluation of the UK NAP

The UK Government has taken significant steps in improving transparency, and increasingly recognises the importance of effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in any given action plan or strategy. If the NAP is to be effective, it must contain strong performance indicators or measurements and have resources available for thorough monitoring and evaluation against them.

Saferworld welcomes the UK Government's willingness to report annually to Parliament on its

⁶ Saferworld (2011), *Bilateral support for women, peace and security in Nepal*, August <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/downloads/pubdocs/bilat.pdf>

NAP progress. At present, the annual report is a narrative description of all activities undertaken by the UK Government related to gender, peace and security and does not reference the activities to the pillars or specific objectives and activities set out in the NAP. Saferworld believes this reporting process would be much more valuable and useful if the government were to report directly against the objectives and activities in the NAP.

Saferworld also recommends that the objectives of the NAP be complemented by a set of indicators that measure the outcome of any action, as opposed to the action alone. For instance, the NAP includes an activity to disseminate a '1325 toolkit' to staff based in developing countries, and its indicator is the dissemination of the toolkit. There is no indicator to assess whether the toolkit made a difference to the in-country staffs' work on implementing UNSCR 1325 and if the toolkit aided the integration of gender into UK development, defence, and diplomatic activity.

Measuring outcomes does not have to mean introducing overly ambitious indicators. Indicators should be realistic and account for long-term change and well as results achievable in the short-term. Without measuring its outcomes, the UK Government cannot ascertain a full picture of its progress in implementing the NAP and achieving its objectives.

Recommendations for the UK Government:

- When reporting annually to Parliament, report activity on gender, peace and security issues directly against the objectives and activities in the NAP, in order for monitoring and evaluation of the government's actions to be more meaningful
- Ensure that indicators in the NAP measure outcomes, and not outputs. Indicators should be realistic and account for both short and long-term impact.

Conclusion

Saferworld believes the UK Government has a good foundation of policies that address global gender, peace and security issues, but more can be done to refine this foundation and to build on it by turning policies into actions. Saferworld welcomes the UK Government's willingness to engage with civil society on the redevelopment of the UK NAP, but we encourage the government to extend this willingness by working with civil society and governments in-country to better improve the effectiveness of NAP content and implementation. Strong ownership of the NAP by all three departments, and departmental cultures that recognise the importance of gender, will also help the UK to further its position as the global leader on gender, peace and security issues.

About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with local people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe that everyone should be able to lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from insecurity and violent conflict.

We are a not-for-profit organisation with programmes in nearly 20 countries and territories across Africa, Asia and Europe.

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