

JOINT SUBMISSION REGARDING BSOS IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

INTRODUCTION

This submission from the Gender and Development (GADN) and the Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) networks focuses on concrete recommendations for the Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS) implementation and action plans. We are committed to ensuring that awareness of women, peace and security is fully integrated in forthcoming plans and we hope the recommendations outlined below can be the start of further conversations to support the development of a gender sensitive implementation of BSOS. Both GADN and GAPS look forward to engaging with HMG as this work develops.

ABOUT GADN

The UK Gender and Development Network (GADN) is a diverse membership network made up of leading UK-based practitioners, consultants and academics working on gender, development and women's rights issues. The Network enables its members to share information and expertise, effectively lobby government and international bodies on gender and development issues and provide expert advice and comment on policies and projects. Our members work in partnership with development and advocacy organisations throughout the world.

ABOUT GAPS

Gender Action for Peace and Security is an expert working group of peacebuilding, human rights, humanitarian and development NGOs. Through research, campaigning and advocacy, we work to bridge the gap between the realities of women (activists and non-activists) at the local level in conflict affected countries and UK decision makers and practitioners working on peace and security. Our mission is to promote, support and monitor the inclusion of a gender perspective in security and peacebuilding policies and the fulfilment of international and national policy commitments. Our ultimate goal is gender equality and sustainable peace.

OVERALL COMMENTS

Following the GAPS submission to the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), we welcome the publication of the Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS) and the UK's commitment to a whole-government approach to conflict prevention and response. We particularly welcome the explicit recognition that 'conflict and violence have a particularly negative impact on women, children and young people,' and that violent conflict also has particularly catastrophic consequences for women who survive sexual violence. We are also pleased to see that paragraph 9.9 which highlights the importance of 'supporting the role of women,' emphasises the centrality of the role of women in building stability and explicitly references the UK's commitment to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) and related resolutions (1820,1888,1889 and 1960) on women, peace and security. We also welcome the £20million dedicated to the early action facility and believe that if it properly integrates gender analysis, it will be a flexible and fast-moving response to threats of instability that can have a real impact on women and girls, for example by providing a rapid response to sexual violence and other human rights violations.

Despite the explicit references to the importance of women, peace and security, there are few tangible commitments to supporting women's participation and tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG) and there is a limited gender perspective mainstreamed throughout the BSOS, for example, the National Action Plan on 1325 (NAP) is not mentioned as one of the strategies with which the BSOS will be aligned and there is no explicit reference of the need for specific gendered analysis of conflict situations, gender sensitive planning of interventions, or dedicated resources for this work. Whilst it is vital that commitments to UNSCR 1325, underpin the BSOS, it is essential that women, peace and security issues are not sidelined solely into activities outlined in the NAP. Our recommendations below demonstrate the need to integrate the principles of UNSCR 1325, CEDAW and other human rights law into all work on conflict and stability i.e. the adoption of a gender perspective that includes the needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction.

We would also welcome further discussion with HMG of concrete steps that will be taken to integrate gender analysis in forthcoming review of peace and security policy, for example the review of the Defence Doctrine in 2012/13. We are happy to work with HMG on the integration of women's rights and gender analysis in all UK peace and security policy and practice, including on implementing the practical recommendations that we have outlined below.

WHY WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY SHOULD BE CENTRAL TO THE BSOS

Women's rights are central to stability

It is vital that women's rights – particularly women's freedom from violence, and their inclusion and meaningful participation in peace and post-conflict recovery processes – are seen as central to the UK Government's conceptualisation of 'stability'.

The BSOS currently understands gender equality aspects in conflict in terms of 'development in reverse' – i.e. that conflict has particularly negative impact on women. We were disappointed to see no reference to women's rights violations and low levels of gender equality as either constituting violent conflict itself or as triggers of violent conflict. Empirical data exists which demonstrates a clear link between gender equality and lower levels of involvement in violence conflict. For example, research carried out by RAND in 2008 has found that gender parity plays a critical role in state stability, and that decisions that are bad for women 'are bad for human security, bad for development, and detrimental to a genuine peace'¹. Furthermore, curtailment of women's rights and increase in patriarchal rhetoric are often linked to increasing militarism and attempts to resolve conflict through violence.² For example, research has shown that in Rwanda the intersection between 'ethnicity' and gender produced highly charged language which was a clear forerunner of rape, sexual violence, forced pregnancy and the use of women to wage the war that was to come.³

We were also disappointed to see that the BSOS does not reiterate the points made in the DFID briefing paper *Working Effectively in Conflict-affected and Fragile Situations: promoting non-discrimination* which outlines that 'donors' have a responsibility to address discrimination within their support to peacebuilding and statebuilding and that 'gender equality should be an early, high priority'⁴.

Women's active participation improves the chances of attaining sustainable peace

As GAPS' publication *UNSCR1325: The participation promise*⁵ reiterates, the inclusion of women is a right and a question of justice. It is also rooted in the premise that their presence, participation and perspectives will improve the chances of attaining sustainable peace. Donald Steinberg, US ambassador to Angola and a member of the Joint Commission charged with implementing the Lusaka Protocol, believes that "*The exclusion of women and gender considerations from the peace process proved to be a key factor in our inability to implement the Lusaka Protocol and in Angola's return to conflict in 1998...I have no doubt that the exclusion of one-half of the population from the Angolan peace process – and from the institutions of governance and the formal economy – meant that inadequate attention was paid to areas essential to consolidate peace and reconstruct the country.*"⁶

Analysis of peace agreements concluded between 1990 and 2010 found not only that only 16% of peace agreements contain references to women, but that these references were often qualitatively poor. Furthermore, only rarely do these references illustrate good practice. There is little systemic inclusion of women in peace agreement text and awareness of gender differential impacts of issues, policies or realities. References to women, often scattered across the document also contravene CEDAW provisions such as the use of quotas that limit the participation of women (Bangladesh/ Chittagong) and references to ensuring women's 'moral integrity' (Philippines).⁷ However, when women are meaningfully involved in peace processes, post-conflict planning and the security sector, these processes have been bolstered and strengthened. Women have been able to mediate internally, ensure the agenda reflects the needs of the whole of society, and bring different perspectives to peacebuilding.

¹C Bernard, *Caution Nation-Builders: Gender assumptions ahead*, (RAND, Winter 2008), at p. 27

²M Caprioli, 'Primed for Violence: The Role of Gender Inequality in Predicting Internal Conflict,' (2003) 49 (2) *International Studies Quarterly* 161

³LL Green, *Gender Hate Propaganda and Sexual Violence in the Rwandan Genocide: An Argument for Intersectionality in International Law*, (2002) 33 *Columbia Human Rights Law Review* 733

⁴DFID, *Working Effectively in Conflict-affected and Fragile Situations* (2010)

⁵S. Smee, *The Participation Promise*, (GAPS, 2011)

⁶D Steinberg, *Failing to Empower Women Peacebuilders: A cautionary tale from Angola*, 2007, available at

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/southern-africa/angola/op-eds/failing-to-empower-women-peacebuilders-a-cautionary-tale-from-angola.aspx>, last visited 27th October 2011

⁷C Bell and C O'Rourke, 'Peace Agreements or Pieces of Paper? The Impact of UNSC Resolution 1325 on Peace Processes and their Agreements,' (2010) 59 *International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 941

Women mobilising for peace: The Women’s Mass Action for Peace Network succeeded in bringing thousands of Liberian women onto the streets of Monrovia and later Accra when peace talks were taking place. This movement, led by young female leaders without political affiliation, mobilised women across the churches and mosques with the simple demand ‘peace and no more war’ and worked with the Mano River Women’s Peace Network who participated in the formal process. The negotiations in Monrovia, largely focused on the demands of the warring parties, lasted for six weeks while violence continued on the streets. Finally it was a mass sit-in by the women which barricaded delegates in meeting rooms that led to international mediators securing agreements and setting deadlines. Liberia has also seen the first all women contingent to serve in a peacekeeping operation. The unit has been credited with increasing the number of women in the Liberian police and defence forces and contributing to an increased sense of safety, particularly notable in the perceptions of women and girls.

Women mediating for peace: In Northern Ireland, women secured seats at the peace table by forming the first woman only political party, the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition, and winning seats in the election. The Coalition was made up of both Catholic and Protestant women and was therefore able to engage all of the parties at the talks. When conflicting parties refused to enter into negotiations, the Coalition eased tensions and promoted dialogue while also ensuring the process moved forward. Their role as equal partners within the peace process enabled the women to take on this role as mediators while holding the parties to account on delivering gender-sensitive and inclusive commitments.

Violence against women and girls is a cause and consequence of conflict

Whilst the BSOS outlines the need for a growing acceptance that the use of violence is not normal or acceptable, it does not specifically address the issue of violence against women and girls as a cause and consequence of conflict.

Violence against women is increasingly recognised as a defining characteristic of modern warfare⁸ and women are targeted as a way for male combatants to humiliate, attack and undermine enemy male combatants. Women are used during conflicts to deliver messages to enemies; they are raped and deliberately impregnated or infected with HIV to destabilise and hurt communities⁹. In this way, violence against women can continue and exacerbate conflict. Moreover, violence against women has explicitly been used to justify violent conflict, for example, Mullah Omah cited the lack of security for citizens, and particularly the rape, torture, and murder of women and children, as one of the main reasons the Taliban emerged in the mid 1990s¹⁰. Violence against women and girls and the lack of justice that often accompanies it in fragile and conflict affected states perpetuates an acceptance of violence and can prolong conflict. Furthermore, evidence shows that violence for women and girls may not necessarily decline once the peace agreements have been signed. In some instances, violence for women increases in the ‘post-conflict’ setting as those involved in the fighting return to families and communities.¹¹ Rates of sexual violence is used by communities themselves as a primary indicator of stability, for example, despite the formal end to violent conflict in Eastern DRC, many people who live there insist that ‘*war is not yet over*’ due to the prevalence of sexual violence.¹²

RECOMMENDATIONS

Conceptual points

- We welcome the paragraph (9.9) on supporting the role of women as central to building stability. It is extremely positive that the BSOS references UNSCR 1325 but there is still much to be done to ensure women, peace and security issues are central to conflict work. As outlined above, there is much more that needs to be done to ensure women’s active and meaningful participation in decision making processes, particularly peace and constitutional processes and post conflict governance. Furthermore, by ratifying UNSCR1325, subsequent resolutions and human rights treaties, HMG has committed to recognising the importance of women’s human rights and that women are central to building stability. This should be reflected by mainstreaming gender throughout the BSOS and its implementation.
- The BSOS implementation plan should recognise VAWG as a core security issue and training, response and guidance should reflect this.

⁸UN Women, *peace and security*, study submitted by the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)

⁹E Rehn and EJ Sirleaf, *Women, war and peace: the independent experts’ assessment on the impact of armed conflict on women and women’s role in peace-building* (UNIFEM, 2002)

¹⁰USAID, *Women and conflict: an introductory guide for programming* (2007), at p.12

¹¹E Porter, *Peacebuilding: Women in International Perspective*, (Routledge, 2007)

¹²C Dolan, *War is Not Yet Over; Community Perceptions of Sexual Violence and its Underpinnings in Eastern DRC*, (International Alert, 2010)

- We welcome the analysis that political inclusion is essential for peace and that political systems that fail to encourage and enable all groups, including women, to participate will generate anger. We are therefore pleased to see explicit recognition that international partners should support inclusive peace agreements and political settlements by supporting coalitions that include a broad cross section of society to build confidence and begin institution building. However, to date, there has not been proactive action from the UK government to meaningfully include women in peace processes and political settlements. The BSOS action plan should clarify how, and by whom, wider support for women's meaningful participation in local, provincial and national political and peace processes will be provided. Any implementation plans should consider the UK's role in: ensuring women are part of peace and transition discussions; giving women a platform to voice their views; addressing gender imbalances and supporting women's involvement in security and justice provision and building women's capacities. HMG should ensure that rhetoric is supported by concrete resources and funding through the conflict pool and other sources.

Early warning systems and conflict assessment

- HMG should be cognisant of the gender composition of the BSOS steering group and ensure gender awareness is mainstreamed in its mandate, terms of reference and operation, including its systemic reviews of UK activity in watchlist countries, in order to ensure not only that approach is 'realistic, appropriately resourced, fully integrated and draws on the greatest possible support from international partners' but also that it takes a gender disaggregated approach i.e. is aware of and takes into account the differential needs of women and men and the impact of UK activity on women and men.
- Any early warning systems developed should include indicators on levels of violence against women and gender inequality including prevalence of or change in rhetoric around women¹³.
- As part of developing early warning systems and reports, HMG should commit to establishing what constitutes 'risks of conflict and insecurity,' 'evidence' and what levels of gender inequality and women's rights violations, including violence against women and girls are sufficient to prompt a response. For example, we can learn from our experience in Libya where there were concerns from government about the adequacy of evidence on widespread sexual violence. We would be happy to work with HMG to develop useful indicators on women's rights, VAWG and gender inequality.
- As well as early warning systems and reports including indicators on VAWG and gender inequality, any 'horizon scanning' or 'emerging issues' documents that are relevant to stability overseas should incorporate information received from women's rights organisations and networks and include analysis on gender inequality and VAWG. Many women's organisations and networks (including those working at regional levels) often have early warning systems which they use to detect and respond to conflict, for example the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. HMG should incorporate such systems as one of its 'external expert' sources, note and act on their recommendations and consider support to this work.
- It is positive the new cross government strategic conflict assessment will consider human rights abuses. As the BSOS recognises, 'conflict and violence have a particularly negative impact on women', therefore we hope the assessment will specifically consider women's human rights abuses.

Partnership and accountability

- We are pleased to see some emphasis on developing partnerships. Analysis and assessments should be informed by civil society and women's organisations on the ground as well as UK NGOs who are also monitoring situations closely. Stronger partnerships with grass-roots organisations, particularly women's organisations, will help to provide a clearer picture of sensitive issues (i.e. gender inequality and VAWG) in rapidly changing environments.
- The BSOS notes the importance of accountability, legitimacy, and respect for human rights. This reiterates a welcome move to conceptualise peace and stability as more than just the absence of immediate violent conflict. Supporting women's role in peace needs to include real and renewed efforts to support women's organisations with core funding over the long term to allow them to build their capacity to advocate for their own interests with their government. We know from our work with women's organisations around the world that with the right support and resources, they can play vital roles in mobilising the public to hold the state to account and to advocate for a sustainable peace, one which has meaning for women and men. This needs to be coupled with tangible protection mechanisms for those who risk their lives by speaking out in hostile political environments.

¹³A 2008 UNIFEM review of early warning indicators found only 11 out of 832 indicators made reference to gender and only one monitored women's human rights: http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_war_peace/prevention_early_warning.php, last visited 27th October 2011. For more information, please see S. Schmeidl and E. Piza-Lopez, *Gender and Conflict Early Warning: A Framework for Action*, (International Alert, 2002), available at <http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display/document/legacyid/401>, last visited 27th October 2011

Security and access to justice

- It is positive that the BSOS recognises that providing assistance for the security sector in fragile states means working with countries and institutions where there are concerns about their respect for human rights and democracy. Women's human rights can be particularly contentious and the UK Government should engage with the security and justice sector in ways which actively promote women's human rights rather than undermine them.
- The BSOS outlines that 'access to justice is a basic needs for all citizens'. However, it is vital that there is recognition that women face additional specific obstacles to accessing justice. If the UK Government engages in supporting 'access to justice' – actions must look at the barriers to justice from a gender perspective. The UK Government should draw on the recommendations made in the recent UN Women progress report *In pursuit of justice*¹⁴.

Importance of legitimate and effective institutions

- Our members' experience corroborates the analysis that violent conflict can occur when people lack confidence in key institutions – particularly institutions responsible for security and justice. We also know from our work on the ground that women and girls have particular issues relating to security and access to justice. Whilst equitable access to justice is rightly recognised as a basic need for all citizens, the BSOS does not explicitly highlight the particular and important difficulties women face in accessing justice – particularly when it comes to VAWG. This needs to be recognised and addressed when outlining approaches to developing core state functions such as security and access to justice. This is particularly important when seen as linked to impunity and the normalisation of violence. As the BSOS correctly outlines, 'there needs to be a growing acceptance that the use of violence is not normal or acceptable'. The lack of justice and continued impunity for perpetrators of domestic violence, sexual violence, and harmful traditional practices, propagates the acceptance of the use of violence as normal.

Government coordination

- DFID focuses on women and girls in their department plans but more can be done through the implementation of the BSOS to engage other government departments with the issue of women, peace and security – for example, MOD, FCO and DFID should be tackling widespread sexual violence as a driver of conflict and promoting women's active participation in politics and decision making. This is particularly important through diplomatic channels.
- The BSOS should link with the Home Office led cross-government strategy and action plan on ending violence against women, which includes an international VAWG dimension. The overseas champion on violence against women, Lynne Featherstone MP, should be engaged in the BSOS process and feed in to the action plan to be developed and National Security Council discussions.
- A member of the National Security Council should have explicit responsibility for women, peace and security issues to ensure that gender perspectives are taking into account in all discussions on stability, peace building and state building.
- The NAP should feed in to development and implementation of the BSOS, for example, the cross-Whitehall group on 1325 should be used as a mechanism to inform and monitor the integration of a gender perspective into activity outlined in the BSOS.
- As the NAP is referenced in the BSOS, it is important that the impact of the BSOS is reflected on in the review of the NAP in October this year and considered and reported on in subsequent years.
- UK cross-government strategies for key countries and regions (outlined in paragraph 9.3) must not only integrate gender analysis and include prioritising the protection and participation of women, but also have coherence with existing women, peace and security policies and plans. These include country policies, including the NAPs developed by countries themselves and the country plans outlined in the bilateral section of the NAP. We would welcome clarification on how HMG plans to ensure policy coherence and also clarity on how cross government reporting frameworks, as outlined in paragraph 11.5 fits in with existing reporting and coordination around the NAP.
- The NAP outlines a commitment that the UK Defence Doctrine will be reviewed to ensure UNSCR 1325 is appropriately referenced. We would be happy to work with the MOD on how to ensure gender, peace and security analysis is reflected in the Defence Doctrine.

Building an evidence base and developing M&E

- When building an evidence base and carrying out monitoring and evaluation activities, it is vital that particular attention is paid to women and that all activities are gender sensitive. All measurements should be gender disaggregated to facilitate a better understanding of the specific circumstances and

¹⁴UN Women, *Progress of the World's Women: In Pursuit of Justice*, (2011), available at <http://progress.unwomen.org/>, last visited 26th October 2011

needs of women. For example, the BSOS notes an indicator on measuring public confidence is 'growing in the ability of a fragile state to deliver the things that they most care about like jobs, security and justice.' It is vital that this measurement considers women's points of view. We know from our collective work that women have very different views on their priorities as well as their conceptualisation of 'security and justice'.

- All independent assessments of the government's overall conflict prevention performance should include gender analysis and measurement against indicators on women, peace and security.
- We welcome the commitment to strengthening the evidence base on Fragile and Conflict Affected States (FCAS). We hope the research programmes which HMG is supporting mainstream gender analysis. In addition to areas outlined in the BSOS, we recommend research is commissioned on women, peace and security issues, including that addressing the research gaps identified by the NAP, particularly in areas of security sector reform, the gendered impact of conflict, including a systematic review of evidence on addressing VAWG in FCAS, and effective female participation in peace building.
- Monitoring and evaluation should be shared. This is important both in terms of accountability but also because it will be helpful for the sector.
- We welcome the idea of expert challenge panels comprising of external experts GADN and GAPS members could bring expertise on a variety of women, peace and security issues and we look forward to further discussing this with you. Furthermore, we have a range of stakeholders, including a broad range of partners working in countries affected by violent conflict, that we believe would add value to discussions.

Resources and skills

- Stabilisation response teams, which consist of people drawn from across government including military, police or civil servants and other experts, should comprise both women and men and include people with specific expertise on gender and GBV. They should meet women's rights activists and women parliamentarians and ministers when on deployment and their mandate should include examination of curtailment of women's human rights, including incidence of violence against women and girls.
- We welcome the programme of diplomatic excellence outlined in the BSOS to ensure that the right people have the right skills. We recommend that these skills also include gender awareness and the ability to gender mainstream in policy and its implementation.
- HMG should ensure women are put forward by the UK for all levels of posts within international peace and security structures quickly and setting targets for the number of such posts filled by women. HMG should also develop a roster in the UK and/ or lead on an international process to develop an accessible pool of women prepared and qualified to take on senior diplomatic posts. This would provide a platform whereby countries can demonstrate their interest in women's meaningful participation and inclusion in international efforts to build stability.
- If HMG is serious about its commitments to UNSCR1325, the conflict pool should reflect this and ensure that the existence of gender mainstreaming and analysis is a key priority when making all funding decisions and that there is money ring fenced to specifically support women in FCAS. We would welcome more information on this, and particularly whether the evaluation of the International Commission for Aid Impact will gender differentiate impact of UK aid. Furthermore the early action facility should be gender sensitive and provide funding for threats of instability that have a real impact on women and girls e.g. rapid response to sexual violence.

Working with multilaterals and regional organisations

- In section 10.2 HMG commits to encouraging the UN Security Council to address impacts of climate change. Similarly we would hope the UK will continue to play a leadership role on women, peace and security issues at the UN. It is particularly important to focus on mainstreaming gender into the Security Council's conflict work given slow progress since UNSCR 1325 was ratified over 10 years ago.
- Peace and security is one of UN Women's key focus areas and HMG should ensure that it engages with UN Women (at country level as well as at HQ level) as part of the BSOS implementation.
- HMG should leverage its influence at the European Union to ensure commitments are translated into increased numbers of women at senior levels in the External Action Service and further integration of gender at the level of Common Security and Defence Policy missions.
- When working with regional organisations such as the African Union, HMG should ensure to engage both their conflict and gender officials as well as work with regional civil society networks such as the West African Civil Society Forum.
- When working with 'traditional partners' and a wider range of countries as detailed in paragraph 19.10, HMG should take opportunities afforded to share experiences of developing gender sensitive peace and security policies and encourage others to do likewise.