



## **UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security Civil Society Consultation**

### **Myanmar**

#### **Oxfam, Women's Organizations Network (WON), and Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS)**

**14<sup>th</sup> June 2014**

The UK NAP workshop was organised by Oxfam, Women's Organizations Network (WON) and Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS). 57 participants from 27 organisations attended the workshop. GAPS, WON and Oxfam worked closely with civil society, Myanmar Peace Center, the Government of Myanmar and British Embassy in Yangon to organise the workshop.

The workshop included the presentation of Robert Nash, Policy and Communication Manger, Oxfam in Myanmar, Nicola Righini, British Embassy Yangon, U Hla Maung Shwe, Consultant, Myanmar Peace Center<sup>1</sup> and Daw Khin Zar Naing, UNFPA Myanmar.

The worked aimed to:

- Maximise input from civil society and HMG experts on women, peace and security and outline what the new NAP should include in the 2014 – 2017 NAP;
- Outline what the Myanmar Section of the NAP should focus on;
- Outline where HMG can make the most impact and add value in the 2014 – 2017 NAP;
- Highlight areas where HMG and CSOs can partner and collaborate;
- Outline areas of best practice where expertise could be shared.

U Hla Maung Shwe, Myanmar Peace Center explained that as UNSCR 1325 has not been comprehensively implemented in Myanmar, the Myanmar Peace Center has not intervened on Women, Peace and Security as part of the peacebuilding process. Discussions on UNSCR 1325 started in Myanmar in 2010. Some women's rights organisations are now using it as a tool. The discussion highlighted that UNSCR 1325 should be implemented in Myanmar but that implementation is only just beginning.

U Hla Maung Shwe outlined the current peace process. It is hoped that the Government of Myanmar will sign a Nationwide Cease Fire Agreement with all armed groups by the end of 2014. Civil Societies hope that women can participate in the dialogue. This is important to ensure that the peace agreement addresses the different way in which women are affected by conflict and war. Cease fire monitoring and implementation process remains very slow. Myanmar has not finalised a framework for implementation and monitoring. Women's rights

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<sup>1</sup> The Myanmar Peace Center is an organisation that initiated the Peace Negotiation process in Myanmar. The Myanmar Peace Center works closely with the Government of Myanmar and the ethnic armed groups and reports directly to the President's Office and speaker of Pyi Thu Hluttaw (Union Level Parliament).



organisations must look at the long term, as well as the negotiations to ensure women's experiences are represented in the longer term process of peace-building. The main concerns expressed by U Hla Maung Shwe were:

- a. Lack of capacity in government, armed groups and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to engage on issues relating to UNSCR 1325. Capacity building is needed for all parties.
- b. Women's rights organisations should participate in the peacebuilding process. Participants welcomed this and acknowledged the importance of engaging with the current decision-makers and ensuring that the voices of women are taken into account.
- c. There is an information gap between the Government, Armed Groups and CSOs. All stakeholders, including decision-makers should encourage and advocate for more transparency between the government, armed groups and CSOs to improve access to and participation in the peace process.

Daw Khin Zar Naing UNFPA Myanmar outlined the civil society engagement the peacebuilding process. Engagement with CSOs to date has been low, which has impacted women's rights organisations' ability to participate at peace negotiations. Women's participation in peace negotiations is very rare and implementation of UNSCR 1325 is very weak in Myanmar. Non-combatants affected by the conflict have been unable to access justice, legal protections and basic services such as healthcare and shelter which can provide increased security and support them to rebuild their lives. She explained that the Myanmar Government has not secured the protection of women's rights during and after conflicts; and that although the Myanmar Government has protection mechanisms such as the Anti Rape Law, they remain weak and do not protect against all forms violence against women and girls. It is very important that Government, CSOs, UN, donors and armed groups work together to implement UNSCR 1325. All the Myanmar Women's Forums held in Myanmar showed that the sharing of women's experiences in peace processes is extremely weak in Myanmar. The main reason outlined for why decision-makers in peace negotiations have not included women to date is because women have not had active role in armed conflict. The key recommendations put forward by Daw Khin Zar Naing were:

- a. The UK Government should support the Myanmar Government to be more effective and accountable on protection, prevention of violence against women and ensuring the security of women during and after conflict.
- b. The UK Government should initiate and support efforts to build trust between the CSOs, government and armed groups.
- c. The UK Government should support women's meaningful participation in peace negotiations in Myanmar
- d. The UK Government should encourage and support the Government of Myanmar to ensure meaningful consultation with the CSOs in the process of peacebuilding.



- e. The UK Government should encourage and support the Government of Myanmar to increase transparency in the peacebuilding process.
- f. The UK Government should encourage and support the Government of Myanmar to establish reporting and monitoring mechanisms that are more responsive and sensitive to women and other minority groups.

## 1. Prevention and Protection

### Recommendation 1

In its new NAP, the UK government should ***commit more resources to prevent and protect women*** who experience violence against women and girls (VAWG) in Myanmar.

- The UK Government should support public discussion in ethnic areas to increase awareness on VAWG.
- The UK Government should support programmes to increase awareness on VAWG in security and justice institutions such as the police and their officials such as military officers, judges, attorneys and government officers.

### Recommendation 2

In its new NAP the UK Government and international community should ***encourage the Government of Myanmar to become more responsive on protection and prevention of women in the following ways:***

- Include a framework to monitor violence against women and girls during and after conflict in peace monitoring mechanism.
- Support and advocate for the Government of Myanmar and armed groups to implement commitments in UNSCR 1325 and develop a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, which includes commitments by government and armed groups, is budgeted, monitored and is developed, implemented and monitored in consultation with civil society
- Support increased transparency between the judicial systems in Myanmar. Cases against military personnel for their conduct against the public should be handled by a public court.

### Recommendation 3

In the new NAP the **UK Government should advocate in support of women's access to the formal justice system and to basic services.**

- The UK Government should support the existing Government-backed organisations to be an effective mechanism for protection and prevention of women through giving one-stop legal, psychological and security services to the survivors of violence and those at risk to violence. Government-backed organisations such as Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association and Myanmar Women Affairs Federation exist across Myanmar, but their women's rights knowledge is weak and their action on addressing women's rights issues is limited. They should also support women's rights organisations who are working on prevention and protection.



- The UK should support women's access to a one-stop service which provides services to survivors of violence and women at risk of violence, including psychological support, healthcare services and economic opportunities.
- The UK Government should support the Government of Myanmar to establish a legal aid service for women to support their access the formal judicial system.

## 2. Participation

### Recommendation 4

In its new NAP the UK Government ***should allocate more funding to support to programmes on women's empowerment and capacity building*** to support their participation in, and engagement with decision makers involved in the peacebuilding process.

- The UK should increase support to programmes which are focused on economic empowerment, including financial literacy and access microfinance. This should be focused on the poorest of the poor women. In addition to participation, this will support all pillars of the NAP.
- The UK and other donors should support a Women's Education Institute which can be a source of information and run education and training for women activists and advocates.
- Support should include funding networking among women leaders and capacity building for the potential women in politics.
- It would be beneficial if the UK Government could share evidence based research which shows women's participation in peacebuilding is important for all parties in conflict and peacebuilding. This would help create space for women leaders.
- The NAP should also work with the Regional Governments and Regional Parliaments in addition to the Union Government and Union Parliament. Training for representatives of these Government bodies to increase awareness on CEDAW, UNSCR 1325 and National Strategic Planning for Advancement of Women (NSPAW) would support Women, Peace and Security objectives and women leaders. Training should also include gender budgeting.
- To support work on participation, the UK NAP should also support the development of positive male leadership programmes to support women's social, political and economic participation.

### Recommendation 5

In its new NAP the UK Government ***should encourage and support the Government of Myanmar and armed groups*** to give increased space for women's active participation.

- The Government of Myanmar, MPC and armed groups should work actively on women's participation and should proactively encourage informal leaders such as religious and social leaders to do so. In the context of Myanmar the informal role of fortune tellers, for example, has a major impact in important decisions and activities supported by the UK, the UK should consider how to engage with such informal leadership to promote women's participation in peacebuilding.



- The UK Government should support multi-stakeholder dialogue on active participation and meaningful consultation including the Government of Myanmar, CSOs, UN Agencies, ethnic leaders, religious leaders, political parties and social leaders. This will support awareness raising on the important role women can play in peacebuilding.
- The UK should advocate for inclusiveness in all areas of peacebuilding, such as in the Camp Management, peace monitoring, psychological, economic, legal and moral services provided to the survivors of violence and women at risk of violence and the conduct and accountability of security personnel.

### **Recommendation 6**

The UK Government should ***support the Government of Myanmar to ensure that women's rights including their role in peace and security are raised in the school curriculum***

- Gender and women's rights, including issued of violence against women and girls should be included in the school curriculum. The UK should advocate for this with the Government of Myanmar and provide funding to support the development and implementation of related school curriculum.

### **3. Legislation, Security and Justice**

#### **Recommendation 7**

The UK Government ***should support reforms to ensure that legislation and polices in Myanmar reflect women's rights.***

- Support to women's centers to enable them to establish One Stop Services which can be used by women to improve their access to legal services and the justice system.
- Extend protection and support in Myanmar and internationally to groups and individuals who are providing human rights protection support to women. It is essential that women human rights defenders are protected from harassment and violence.
- Provide technical and financial support to the development of specialist legal services for women.
- Support the active involvement of the Public Supreme Court and Military Supreme Court in addressing violence against women.
- Encourage and support the review and reform of customary and statutory law to ensure they support women's rights and security.
- Increase the representation of women in security and justice institutions, including recruitment of women police officers<sup>2</sup> and army.
- The UK Government should initiate exchange visits for Police Officers, Women's Rights Organisations, armed groups and Members of Parliament to provide

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<sup>2</sup> In Myanmar there are limited numbers of women police. In some areas in Myanmar the wife of the male police officers help to investigate the cases.



examples of Women, Peace and Security programmes, systems, support and policies. There should be a gender balance in all such visits.

### **Recommendation 8**

The UK Government *should introduce support and incentives for the Government of Myanmar and other stakeholders to take action on women, peace and security.*

- The UK Government NAP should only fund projects that can demonstrate a contribution to delivering UNSCR 1325, for both Government and NGOs. This should be monitored to ensure implementers are delivering on their UNSCR 1325 commitments.

### **Recommendation 9**

In its new NAP the UK Government *should commit more resources for awareness raising to the community* regarding law and policies.

- The International Community should support media to broadcast awareness raising programmes on Violence Against Women and Girls and the legislative framework which supports this.
- UK media outlets such as the BBC should broadcast programmes and new items on issues affecting women and on social norms and cultural practices, including the legislation which supports women, to demonstrate the importance of women's rights and Women, Peace and Security

### **Recommendation 10**

The UK Government *should ensure that budget is allocated for Women, Peace and Security* to support both CSOs and Government in the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

- The UK Government should provide technical and financial support to implement the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW) not only to the Government, but also to CSOs.
- The UK Government should encourage the Government of Myanmar to ensure the budget provides sufficient resource for UNSCR 1325, including to facilitate the participation and capacity building of women's rights organisations, networks and local NGOs.

\*\* International actors should ensure that DO NO HARM approaches are implemented. Trust building among all the ethnic, Government and CSOs essential in Myanmar. As a result, the international community should always prioritise consultation with local experts and stakeholders during programme design and implementation.\*\*