

## **Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict Briefing**

### **Background:**

Gender-based violence (GBV) is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality. It happens in every country, whether at peace or at war. Sexual violence in conflict (SVC) is often used as a cheap and effective weapon with the intention to humiliate, demoralise and destabilise communities. It is a fundamental violation of human rights and poses a significant personal and public health challenge, through both physical and mental trauma.

SVC affects people of all genders and all ages. However, women and girls are overwhelmingly affected by SVC and GBV more widely. Although data on SVC prevalence is incomplete and there is consistent underreporting for all genders, current data suggests women and girls are more likely to experience sexual violence and repetition of abuse. Furthermore, SVC also reflects a wider continuum of GBV which women and girls experience outside of conflict. Women and girls also experience different forms and consequences of violence that are specific to their gender. They are targets of SVC as a means of genocide or ethnic cleansing through, for example forced pregnancies by another group or forced sterilisation. Women and girls can be targets for SVC because of the value placed on their bodies, reproduction and sexual purity, and the known effects this will have on their place in communities through stigma and exclusion. As a result of SVC women and girls are often rejected by families and communities and blamed for being abused. Unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, stigmatisation and physical and mental trauma ensure that the consequences of sexual violence continue long after conflict. Resourcing to protect women and girls from violence and to prevent SVC is inadequate. Holistic responses (see recommendation 3) to SVC are lacking, as are resources to support their participation.

Whilst sexual violence has featured as an opportunistic crime and as deliberate tactic in conflicts throughout history, it was not until the 1990s when it was recognised as a crime against humanity. Conflict often exacerbates existing poor levels of infrastructure where there are already few avenues for survivors to access health, psychosocial support and justice services. Most survivors of violence do not report attacks due to stigma, fear of retribution, lack of confidence in security and justice systems, lack of awareness of their rights and how to register abuse. However when health and psychosocial services are available, women are more likely to report incidents and seek assistance despite stigma, ongoing insecurity and fear.

In 2000, the UN Security Council enacted Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) which brought together existing state and UN obligations for women's rights in conflict-affected contexts. They are framed within the four interlinking pillars of protection, participation, prevention and relief and recovery. Since then, there have been 6 subsequent resolutions that have further codified WPS obligations. Preventing SVC is relevant to all four pillars of UNSCR 1325.

Greater attention and resources are needed to document SVC against men and boys as well as sexual and gender minorities to better understand and respond to the specific needs of all survivors. Funding is needed to prevent and respond to SVC against all genders. There should not be a hierarchy between survivors of SVC. People of all genders are subjected to SVC and the only way to fully address the abuse is through tackling root causes and ensuring that survivor services are tailored to their needs.

### **The Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative and the Global Summit:**

The Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) presents a real opportunity to reinvigorate the discussion on GBV in conflict. It adds impetus into ensuring that key gaps in implementation of the

WPS framework are addressed. The last two years have seen a marked increase in international commitments to address SVC, culminating in the Global Summit to End SVC. At the Summit, the UK will launch its new 2014–2017 National Action Plan on WPS which outlines how it will meet WPS obligations.

### **Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS):**

GAPS is a network of development, human rights, humanitarian and peacebuilding NGOs and practitioners. GAPS promotes, facilitates and monitors the meaningful inclusion of gender in all aspects of UK policy and practice on peace and security. Through advocacy, campaigning and research, GAPS works to bridge the gap between the realities of women in conflict-affected states and UK decision-makers and practitioners.

Based on its collective experience and expertise<sup>1</sup>, GAPS makes the following four recommendations to the UK government regarding the development, delivery and follow up to the 2014 Global Summit.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 1: The UK ensures that the Global Summit situates tackling sexual violence in conflict within the broader Women, Peace and Security framework; ensuring a coherent and coordinated approach and recognising the importance of a holistic approach to achieving all four Women, Peace and Security pillars.**

- The core texts for the WPS framework are the Beijing Platform for Action, the UN Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the seven UNSCRs which bring together state obligations for women’s rights in conflict-affected contexts and frame them within the four interlinking pillars of protection, participation, prevention and relief and recovery.
- The launch of the UK’s new **National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP)** at the Global Summit provides an opportunity for the UK to demonstrate high-level support for a holistic approach to UNSCRs 1325-2122. It should fully integrate efforts from all UK government agencies including the Department for International Development (DFID) work on relief and recovery as well as its Theory of Change on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), which highlights the importance of challenging harmful social norms that perpetuate and condone VAWG.
- The **UK should encourage and support other governments to take a holistic approach to implementing WPS commitments**. This should include support to other governments to develop and effectively implement their own NAPs. Such support should include funding, developing timelines for implementation, consultation with women’s rights organisations and wider civil society, and strong, consultative Monitoring and Evaluation. Commitments made at the Global Summit by governments should fully cover all four WPS pillars, be consistent with existing international frameworks on women’s rights such as CEDAW and UNSCR 1325, national frameworks and processes, and should be supported by strong implementation commitments to ensure that they result in tangible actions.
- As co-chair, the UK should ensure that the **Global Summit’s outcome document** explicitly links and makes recommendations under each of the four pillars including, for example, increasing the number of women in decision-making roles in local governance structures, national government and UN agencies, including as peacekeeping, security, and justice. It should also advocate for a survivor-centred approach to justice and recognise the importance of providing holistic humanitarian services and support for survivors. Furthermore, the outcome document should make explicit links to [international commitments made under the Call to Action to End Violence Against Women and Girls in Emergencies](#) (DFID and Government of Sweden, November 2013 Call to Action).

#### **RECOMMENDATION 2: The UK should ensure that relevant and representative civil society organisations, including women’s rights organisations, can fully and meaningfully participate in the design, delivery and monitoring of the Global Summit and its outcomes.**

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<sup>1</sup> GAPS members include Action Aid, Amnesty International UK, CARE International UK, Conciliation Resources, International Alert, International Rescue Committee, Northern Ireland Women’s European Platform, Oxfam GB, Saferworld, Soroptimist International, Widows for Peace through Democracy, Womankind Worldwide, Women for Women International, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), World Vision, UN Association, and UNWomen UK.

- The important roles of women's rights organisations and women's human rights defenders were recognised in the April 2013 G8 Declaration on Preventing SVC and the UN General Assembly (UNGA) Declaration in September 2013. Despite this recognition, women's rights organisations are underfunded and often marginalised from accessing funds. This in turn impacts their ability to participate in national and international decision-making processes that directly affect their lives, community and work.
- The **Global Summit outcomes** should recognise the crucial role women's rights, girls' rights and other civil society organisations play in achieving WPS goals, including in SVC and protecting violence survivors. All governments, including donor governments, should be committed to genuine and meaningful consultation and partnership with women's rights organisations and wider civil society in the design and delivery of their commitments made at the Summit. This inclusion is not only crucial to ensure accountability but also to ensure that commitments reflect real needs.
- Governments have also agreed under UNSCRs 2106 and 2122, and the G8 Declaration on PSVI to increase support, including financial, capacity-building and security support to organisations who work to prevent and respond to GBV. **The Global Summit provides an opportunity for governments to commit** to undertaking measurable actions to implement this commitment and support local women's rights organisations, including the creation of accessible funding streams. Governments should also integrate security and protection mechanisms into all programmes that are delivered by, or involve local organisations, including by supporting organisations to identify security risks.
- Governments that made commitments under the November **Call to Action** should also make relevant follow-up commitments at the Global Summit including by providing support to implement wider commitments through multilaterals and NGOs.
- **EU governments** should also recognise existing commitments to human rights defenders under the EU guidelines and ensure that these are implemented including country-specific human rights defender plans that are gender-sensitive, including in Afghanistan.
- The **Global Summit** must include a robust accountability and monitoring framework, with a clear role for women's rights and civil society organisations and mechanisms for governmental reporting to ensure that progress is not lost and that commitments are effectively implemented. It is essential the women's rights organisations who operate at local and national levels are able to oversee global and national commitments and hold their governments to account.

**RECOMMENDATION 3: The UK ensures that the Global Summit seeks to address the root causes of sexual and gender-based violence, including sexual violence, and ensure that conflict prevention and peacebuilding fully addresses and integrates women's rights and promotes gender equality.**

- The World Health Organisation has referred to VAWG as an epidemic with one in three women suffering physical or sexual abuse in her lifetime. Whilst conflict exacerbates levels of GBV and forms of GBV are adopted as tactics in conflict, rape and other forms of sexual violence are not limited to areas affected by conflict. Addressing the root causes requires promoting gender equality in the wider context in war and peace, as well as including other types of GBV. As recognised under DFID's Theory of Change, the effective elimination of VAWG requires a holistic approach across multiple levels (individual, relationships, community and society) and across sectors (economic life, education, health, justice, security and welfare) as well as tackling the underlying social and gender norms that perpetuate VAWG.
- The Summit outcomes, including government and multilateral commitments and the outcome document, must embrace this holistic approach. Ending impunity, improving education and supporting women's leadership (including in politics, public life, emergency preparedness and response, and security services) are also proven vital components of effectively preventing VAWG. Strategically engaging with men to enable them to become agents of change in addressing GBV is also crucial to addressing harmful norms and promoting gender equality more broadly.

- Conflict prevention requires women's participation and gender sensitivity. Women are largely excluded from emergency preparedness and response in conflict, including on GBV. Peace negotiations are often not limited to the cessation of hostilities but begin defining post-conflict power structures and laws that either ensure women's inclusion or exclusion in peace and development as well as conflict prevention. Women and girl combatants are also largely forgotten within specific post-conflict processes, such as disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes. This includes when there is no reintegration of women and girls who were forced into wartime 'marriage' and abandoned by their 'husbands', leaving them stigmatised, traumatised and without means to support themselves or their children. At the Summit, governments should make quantified commitments to women's participation and meaningful inclusion in conflict and GBV programming and peace processes.
- Furthermore, women in conflict suffer from intimate partner violence, which constitutes the most common type of GBV in emergencies. Survivors of all forms of VAWG, including SVC, should have access to quality and comprehensive services including shelters, health and psychosocial support, and justice which should all be safe, confidential and sex and age appropriate.
- **The UK should use DFID's Theory of Change** to support other governments to develop and implement their own Theories of Change that are relevant to their national contexts, including through regional and thematic platforms like the EU and the Good Humanitarian Partnership. It should also support relevant HMG priority states (under the NAP, PSVI, DFID and FCO countries of concern) to map VAWG prevention and protection policies and programmes, helping international donors to identify gaps and opportunities to provide support by **making tangible and country-specific commitments at the Global Summit**.
- The **Global Summit's outcomes** should ensure governments take a survivor-centred approach to justice. This requires: respecting survivors' decision regarding their own participation in criminal justice processes; informed consent regarding their experiences and information; providing comprehensive services regardless of survivors' decisions to pursue prosecution; safe access to informal justice mechanisms; and safe and sustainable access to health and psychosocial services. It should recognise that no survivor of SVC can sustain participation in justice process without safe and on-going access to medical programmes and longer-term health, psychosocial and livelihoods programmes. This should be linked to tackling impunity and preventing further GBV.
- **Government commitments made at the Global Summit** should include robust and nationally relevant measureable actions that are designed to address the root causes of Sexual and GBV and VAWG. In order to prevent SVC, it will also be necessary for governments to address the root causes of conflict and prevention of violence in the first instance. Such commitments should be developed in collaboration with governments and women's rights organisations to ensure they are linked to survivor needs, civil society priorities and relevant national processes.
- The outcomes document should acknowledge the deeper root causes of GBV and its exacerbation during conflict. Donor government commitments should include increasing their funding of programmes that tackle the root causes of VAWG and violent conflict; specifically those programmes that work with communities that seek to understand and challenge harmful social norms.
- The **Global Summit's outcome document** should commit governments to integrating gender analyses into all conflict analysis tools in order to make conflict prevention activities more gender sensitive, and ensure that data is gender-disaggregated to allow for better analysis and monitoring and evaluation.

**RECOMMENDATION 4: The UK should actively engage militaries, including the UK Ministry of Defence, to more effectively implement the United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, UNGA Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict and G8 Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict**

- Ensuring militaries are engaged is essential for the effective implementation of WPS obligations, including around ending SVC. Not only do militaries have a vital role to play in identifying, reporting and responding to incidences of SVC, but they also play important roles through training other

militaries and security services. Furthermore, tackling impunity for sexual violence committed by state security personnel, including police and army, and armed groups is crucial to preventing further abuse.

- Under the WPS framework, states have committed to incorporating guidance and training on the protection, rights and particular needs of women, involving women in peacebuilding and peacekeeping measures into national training programmes for military and police personnel, and recognising the roles that peacekeepers play in providing humanitarian and civil protection. This includes enforcing disciplinary measures and training for the categorical prohibition of all forms of sexual violence against civilians and the evacuation of women and children under imminent threat of sexual violence to safety.
- In the G8 PSVI Declaration, Foreign Ministers committed to reviewing the training and doctrine provided to their national military and police, including the training and support provided to other states and through multilateral operations. This was echoed by the UNGA Declaration of commitment to end SVC where member states committed to ensure national and military doctrines and training are in accordance with international law so as to enable more effective prevention and responses to SVC.
- Some states have implemented these commitments and effectively integrated WPS into their militaries. The Canadian military incorporates WPS internally and into all training provided to other states and the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations integrates gender perspectives into all peace support operations.
- The **UK Ministry of Defence** should develop an implementation plan for the UK National Action Plan on WPS which includes military commitments in the G8 Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict and UNGA Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. It should also include commitments to adopting NATO Bi-Strategic Command Directive 40-1, related NATO doctrine and training based on it. The Defence elements of the Implementation Plan should include: UNSCR 1325 doctrine; implementation of relevant training for all personnel; development of specialist gender capabilities; measurable targets; female leadership and gender-responsive service culture; and processes to ensure internal and external accountability for achieving these targets. External accountability mechanisms should include regular consultation with external bodies and civil society, including, for example; the Service Complaints Commissioner, the APG on WPS, GAPS, the International Association of Women Police, and NATO.
- The **Global Summit** should seek to facilitate dialogue between militaries and experts about the skills, training, standards and accountability measures needed to prevent and respond to SVC.
- Governments at **the Global Summit** should be encouraged to make national commitments that seek to ensure that training and other assistance provided to national military, judicial and security sector personnel (including police, correctional services, immigration and border control) in conflict-affected states covers: SVC, GBV and WPS. They should also commit to measures to provide the full and equal participation of women including at higher levels and ranks; accountability mechanisms to prevent and respond to SVC, GBV; and include systems to monitor trainee awareness and application of the training.

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