



SUBMISSION: INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

February 2013

The Associate Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security (APG) welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the Select Committee's inquiry into UK efforts to combat violence against women and girls (VAWG). It comes as a timely moment, with the Department for International Development (DFID) paying increasing attention to tackling VAWG, DFID starting to develop the next phase of its country operational plans¹ and key opportunities for the UK to influence the international agenda in the year ahead.

VAWG is widespread across all societies, communities and countries and in times of conflict and peace. It is a fundamental violation of human rights, can constitute genocide and crimes against humanity and, if perpetrated in the context of conflict, can amount to war crimes. States have undertaken to address this, through the promulgation of international human rights standards and at the United Nations and in regional fora.² International, regional and national instruments recognise states must take action to prevent and respond to VAWG, that VAWG is a development and human rights issue and that it is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality. As such, ending VAWG is valuable in and of itself, will lift barriers to women and girls achieving other rights and entitlements and contribute to good governance and long-term and sustainable peace.

The APG is pleased to see the UK increasing commitment to tackling VAWG overseas, demonstrated by new policy and financial commitments,³ the appointment of a Ministerial Champion,⁴ expansion of DFID programming and capacity building of country offices and commitment to mobilise the international community through the UK's presidency of the G8 and at the Commission on the Status of Women in 2013.

While welcoming growing attention and resources, this submission will highlight a number of areas where action needs to be taken and make the following recommendations:

- A greater proportion of DFID's programming and funding for tackling VAWG should focus explicitly on tackling root causes and directly address women's empowerment.
- Effective systems should be put in place to track how much money is being spent on women's rights and who receives this funding, including through tracking all aid using the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) gender equality marker.
- A review of funding mechanisms should take place to ensure accessibility and additional, dedicated funding provided to women's rights organisations working on

¹The current Operational Plans run from 2011-2015 and are available here:

<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/news/latest-news/2011/action-plans-set-out-future-of-uk-aid/>.

²This includes the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), Beijing Platform for Action (1995), the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (2000), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003), the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Sexual Violence in Conflict and UN Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1894 and 1960.

³Policies include the UK's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, the Cross Government VAWG Strategy and Action Plan, commitment in DFID's Business Plan 2011-2015 to approve new VAWG programmes. DFID has also launched a VAWG Research and Innovation Fund.

⁴Please see here for more details: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/news/latest-news/2010/lynne-featherstone-appointed-international-violence-against-women-champion-/>.

VAWG, including through devolved funding via women's funds and ensuring at least 15 percent of all UK conflict and peacebuilding funds, in line with UN targets,⁵ are spent on addressing women's specific needs and advancing gender equality.

- Recognition of and protection for women human rights defenders as agents of change should be made a cross-cutting issue throughout all aspects of development work, including in all policies including business strategy, programming, monitoring and evaluation, DFID's priority pillars and through close coordination between DFID and UK embassies in country.
- Security of women human rights defenders should be recognised as a legitimate use of development money with questions related to risk in funding application forms and reporting processes including harassment and insecurity experienced during the project.
- A system to share lessons and training between DFID staff around preventing and responding to attacks and harassment of women human rights defenders encountered in development projects should be put in place.
- Implementation of the Building Stability Overseas Strategy should recognise VAWG as a core security issue and that women's unequal power in society is a driver of violence conflict, with this understanding being properly reflected in conflict analysis, training, response and guidance.
- A member of the National Security Council should have explicit responsibility for women, peace and security to ensure gender analysis is taken into account in all discussions on stability, peace building and state building.
- An assessment of the integration of women, peace and security analysis into UK security and justice sector programming in fragile and conflict affected states should be carried out as part of the 2013 evaluation of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.
- DFID should convene a meeting of donors to discuss ways to fill funding gaps to ensure access to safe and confidential health services for survivors of VAWG which respond to psychological trauma and provide emergency reproductive health services.
- The Ministerial Champion on VAWG Overseas should have the access and resources to drive the agenda forward across Government, especially across the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, DFID and the Ministry of Defence, and report annually to parliament on progress.
- All DFID Operational Plans should be required to outline how to address VAWG as part of their wider programming. In fragile and conflict affected states and countries in transition all DFID operational plans should reference the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and outline how the UK will meet its women, peace and security commitments.
- The UK should show leadership at the Commission on the Status of Women to protect existing human rights commitments and supports the call by the UN Convened Expert Group for the development of an international implementation plan to end VAWG.
- The UK should promote the inclusion of a specific target on reducing VAWG under a standalone goal on gender in the post 2015 development framework.

Holistic approaches to gender equality, women's rights and leadership

1. DFID's *Theory of Change for Tackling Violence against Women and Girls* explicitly states that VAWG is caused by gender inequality and that empowerment of women and girls is a prerequisite for effective prevention and response.⁶ However a relatively small proportion of programming addresses women's empowerment compared to building institutional

⁵United Nations, 'Report of the Secretary General on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding,' A/65/354-S/2010/466, October 2010.

⁶This includes unequal power relations between women and men, rigid gender roles, norms and hierarchies and ascribing women lower status in society.

capacity.⁷ While investment in formal security and justice sectors such as the police and judiciary are necessary, this will have limited impact without concomitant efforts to tackle the root causes of violence and gender discrimination and promoting women's empowerment and equality. Women and girls often are unable or unwilling to access formal institutions due to limited awareness of rights, stigma and lack of economic autonomy and as there are few women present in these highly masculinised structures.⁸ Increasing the quality and quantity of participation and leadership in political, economic and cultural decision-making and at community, national, regional and international levels is key to preventing VAWG.

The APG recommends that:

- A greater proportion of DFID's programming and funding for tackling VAWG should focus explicitly on tackling root causes and directly address women's empowerment.

Supporting the agents of change

2. Recent research looked at activism and policy development in over seventy countries and across four decades. It found mobilisation of feminist activists and women's rights organisation had increased and longer lasting impact than intra-legislative political factors, such as political parties or the number of women politicians, or economic factors such as national wealth.⁹ Despite their catalytic roles in preventing and responding to VAWG, the contributions of women human rights defenders (WHRDs) and women's rights organisations continue to be overlooked and inadequate support offered. The need to support women's rights organisations is emphasised in DFID's Theory of Change however it is not clear how DFID is implementing this principle into practice.

3. At present, many funding streams remain non-gender disaggregated. For example, data on spending totals in peacebuilding funds is not disaggregated to give the proportion directed at activities specifically to promote women's rights and their participation in peacebuilding.¹⁰

4. Given this, it is difficult to assess the proportion of funds given to women's rights organisations by the UK. However, at a conference and roundtable the APG held with women human rights defenders in October 2012, lack of accessibility to funding streams by small women's rights organisations, many of them in rural areas and whose first language was not English was repeatedly stressed by women present. One-tenth of the 1,119 organisations from over 140 countries surveyed by the Association of Women's Rights in Development (AWID) received funding from bilateral, national governments and international non-governmental organisations.¹¹ Only 1.3 percent of the funds for gender equality screened by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for

⁷As shown by DFID's mapping of its existing VAWG programmes, available on request from DFID.

⁸For example, see C. Castillojo, 'Building a State that Works for Women: Integrating Gender into Post-Conflict State Building,' *Working Paper 107*, (FRIDE, 2011).

⁹M. Htun and L. Weldon, 'The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspective, 1975 - 2005,' 106 (3) *American Political Science Review* August 2012 548, available here:

<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=8675829>.

¹⁰Please see the answer given by Baroness Northover, government spokesperson in the House of Lords on International Development to Baroness Hamwee on 22nd October 2012, available here: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201213/ldhansrd/text/121022w0001.htm#12102222000880>.

¹¹A. Pittman et al, *2011 AWID Global Survey: 'Where is the Money for Women's Rights?'* (AWID, 2012), available here: <http://www.awid.org/Library/2011-AWID-Global-Survey-Where-is-the-Money-for-Women-s-Rights-Preliminary-Research-Results>.

Economic Cooperation and Development, which groups the world's main donors, went to women's rights organisations and women's ministries in 2010.¹²

5. There are innovative models that DFID should adopt to ensure accessibility. At present, the APG can find no evidence that DFID supports women's funds which give funding in the small amounts required by women's rights organisations, allow simplified application, reporting and monitoring processes and provide core costs and multi-year funding which ensures sustainability and enables long term planning. They have a critical role in funding organisations that bilateral donors are unable to fund directly by allowing donors to subcontract administrative and partnership work. The Netherlands, the Republic of Ireland and Sweden all fund women's funds.

6. Further, the APG has serious concerns that DFID programming may inadvertently expose WHRDs to risk. They face attacks and intimidation including by powerful elements in society; both because they are working to empower women and because they are women themselves.¹³ At the APG WHRD conference and parliamentary roundtable, women defenders present engaged in VAWG work stressed that, if increasing attention is being paid by the UK, concurrent work to support and protect WHRDs and organisations engaged in providing services, conducting advocacy and doing social norm and empowerment work is essential. DFID must take steps to develop strategies to mitigate the risk of backlash against

Six armed men in army uniforms broke into the home of Justine Masika Bihamba who documents evidence of sexual violence and other war crimes in east DRC in 2007, tied up members of her family at gunpoint and sexually assaulted and attempted to rape one of her daughters. Although they have been identified, as of January 2012, none of them have been arrested. The men repeatedly threaten Justine and her children in the streets around their home. Justine says, '*Women human rights defenders need special protection. Even compared with male human rights defenders, who are themselves vulnerable to attack, women are more so. Women are considered inferior and when they are attacked, they find little or no support from their male colleagues, even HRDs themselves.*'

Kaavya Asoka, *Global Report on the Situation of Women Human Rights Defenders*, (International Coalition of Women Human Rights Defenders, 2012), pp. 90-91

women human rights defenders in case of hostility, involving defenders and their organisations in their drafting and monitoring.¹⁴ Working closely with the police and others involved in law enforcement to support women's rights is also a key way to mitigate backlash.¹⁵ Not only will this protect women who are engaged in prevention and response to gender-based violence but these steps consist of prevention of violence in and of themselves.

¹²S. Tolmay, *Financing for Gender Equality: Rhetoric Versus Real Financial Support*, (AWID, 2012).

¹³United Nations, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Margaret Sekaggya*, A/HRC/16/44, December 2010.

¹⁴Practical measures are outlined in the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders and Violence against Women: EU Human Rights Defenders Guidelines available here:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/16173cor.en08.pdf> and EU guidelines on violence against women and girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them available here: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/16173cor.en08.pdf>.

¹⁵I. Barcia and A. Penchaszadeh, *Ten Insights to Strengthen Responses for Women Human Rights Defenders at Risk*, (AWID, 2012), available here:

<http://www.awid.org/content/download/136703/1522035/file/WHRD%20Ten%20Insights%20ENG.pdf>.

7. While welcoming the scaling up of DFID's programming work on VAWG, the APG believes that this must be guided by the principle of 'do no harm' and work must be undertaken to mitigate backlash. The APG has received little indication that this work is being done.

The APG recommends that:

- Effective systems should be put in place to track how much money is being spent on women's rights and who receives this funding, including through tracking all aid using the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) gender equality marker.
- A review of funding mechanisms should take place to ensure accessibility and additional, dedicated funding provided to women's rights organisations working on VAWG, including through devolved funding via women's funds and ensuring at least 15 percent of all UK conflict and peacebuilding funds, in line with UN targets,¹⁶ are spent on addressing women's specific needs and advancing gender equality.
- Recognition of and protection for women human rights defenders as agents of change should be made a cross-cutting issue throughout all aspects of development work, including in all policies including business strategy, programming, monitoring and evaluation, DFID's priority pillars and through close coordination between DFID and UK embassies in country.
- Security of women human rights defenders should be recognised as a legitimate use of development money with questions related to risk in funding application forms and reporting processes including harassment and insecurity experienced during the project.
- A system to share lessons and training between DFID staff around preventing and responding to attacks and harassment of women human rights defenders encountered in development projects should be put in place.

Policy coherence and cross Whitehall coordination

8. The UK has committed to mainstreaming women, peace and security analysis throughout its work in fragile and conflict affected states. This includes preventing and responding to VAWG, increasing women's participation in formal peace processes, including women's human rights in transitional justice and mainstreaming gender analysis in peacekeeping operations. Although the UK continues to be one of the leaders of the women, peace and security agenda, more needs to be done to translate policy commitments to reality and ensure work on VAWG across the three international departments align and mutually reinforce.

9. The *National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security* is co-owned by the three international departments and outlines UK government efforts to prevent and respond to VAWG in conflict affected countries, reduce the impact of conflict on women and girls and promote their inclusion in formal conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. Progress has been made in training, country programmes, operations and allocation of staff resources in the past three years. However, the APG continues to be concerned that integrated gender perspectives and the links between VAWG and conflict prevention continue to remain confined to the NAP and not adequately mainstreamed into cross departmental policy on conflict prevention and response.

10. In July 2011 the UK published its *Building Stability Overseas Strategy* (BSOS) where it committed to a whole of government approach to conflict prevention and response. It explicitly recognised that '*conflict and violence have a particularly negative impact on*

¹⁶United Nations, 'Report of the Secretary General on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding,' A/65/354-S/2010/466, October 2010.

women, children and young people,' that violent conflict also has particularly catastrophic consequences for women who survive sexual violence and emphasised the centrality of the role of women in building stability.¹⁷ Despite these explicit references however, the document contained a limited gender perspective and few tangible commitments to supporting women's participation and tackling VAWG. This trend has continued in its implementation, for example, the draft guidelines to conducting a *Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability* do not require those conducting conflict analysis to take into account the contributions and differential needs of risks experienced by girls, women, boys and men in areas affected by violent conflict. It is unlikely that crisis response and prevention will integrate gender analysis if conflict analysis is not conducted in a gender sensitive manner.

The APG recommends that:

- Implementation of the Building Stability Overseas Strategy should recognise VAWG as a core security issue and that women's unequal power in society is a driver of violence conflict, with this understanding being properly reflected in conflict analysis, training, response and guidance.
- A member of the National Security Council should have explicit responsibility for women, peace and security to ensure gender analysis is taken into account in all discussions on stability, peace building and state building.

11. The APG warmly welcomes the Foreign Secretary's *Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative* (PSVI) and the prioritisation of gender-based violence by the UK Government as a key area of foreign policy. However, although ministers have stated that DFID has an important role to play, it remains unclear how DFID fits into the initiative despite the need for coordinated action by donors in order for progress to be made in preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict. Two areas where DFID should support FCO efforts are security and justice sector reform and funding for survivor services.

12. Ensuring existing DFID support builds security and justice systems that are accountable, responsive and women and survivor friendly would prevent abuses by security forces, ends impunity and improve access to justice. All DFID security and justice sector reform (SJSR) programming should be gender sensitive and include measures to tackle VAWG. DFID committed in the 2012 revision of the NAP to integrate women, peace and security considerations into SJSR programming in fragile and conflict affected states. Progress towards achieving this should be monitored by assessing inclusion in country operational plans and business cases in the 2013 evaluation of the NAP.

13. Although VAWG is a predictable and common threat in emergencies,¹⁸ specialised and integrated services for survivors are often sidelined and deprioritised. For example, of the \$31m allocated to DRC between January and October 2012, protection received less than 1 percent of funds.¹⁹ Understanding that VAWG programming needs to be funded as part of lifesaving humanitarian response from the onset of emergencies onwards is still weak across donors and the international community.

The APG recommends that:

¹⁷Building Stability Overseas Strategy, July 2011, available here:

<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/Building-stability-overseas-strategy.pdf>.

¹⁸Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Gender Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings, available here:

http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-subsubsidi-tf_gender-gbv.

¹⁹Please see the Central Emergency Response Fund website for more details:

<http://www.unocha.org/cerf/cerf-worldwide/where-we-work/cod-2012>.

- An assessment of the integration of women, peace and security analysis into UK security and justice sector programming in fragile and conflict affected states should be carried out as part of the 2013 evaluation of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.
- DFID should convene a meeting of donors to discuss ways to fill funding gaps to ensure access to safe and confidential health services for survivors of VAWG which respond to psychological trauma and provide emergency reproductive health services.

14. Each country in which DFID operates has an *Operational Plan* which maps the results that will be achieved and how progress will be measured from 2011 to 2015. The majority of these Plans inadequately address women's rights concerns and very few of them mention VAWG.

15. Afghanistan is a focus country for the NAP and one of 27 countries where DFID has dedicated VAWG programming but, despite 87 percent of women experiencing at least one form of violence,²⁰ VAWG is not mentioned in the country Operational Plan. The Committee found in its 2012 report that *'DFID has done very little explicitly on gender issues nor directed funding clearly towards women and girls programmes as can be seen by the lack of gender specific projects.'*²¹

16. DFID country teams will start developing the next phases of Operational Plans at the start of the 2013-2014 financial year. UK strategies for countries and regions 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. The Ministerial Champion on VAWG Overseas should lead in driving this forward.

The APG recommends that

- The Ministerial Champion on VAWG Overseas should have the access and resources to drive the agenda forward across Government, especially across the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, DFID and the Ministry of Defence, and report annually to parliament on progress.
- All DFID Operational Plans should be required to outline how to address VAWG as part of their wider programming. In fragile and conflict affected states and countries in transition all DFID operational plans should reference the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and outline how the UK will meet its women, peace and security commitments.

Maximising opportunities to influence the international agenda

17. The UK continues to be a key international development voice. The months ahead offer important opportunities where the UK has the influence to intensify international, regional and national efforts to respond to and prevent VAWG. As outlined above, the UK is prioritising VAWG during its G8 presidency. The 2013 Commission on the Status of Women will focus on the elimination and prevention of violence against women and girls. The APG welcomes the emphasis DFID has placed on working with like minded states to ensure strong conclusions that do not erode the existing human rights framework. This

²⁰Global Rights, *Living with violence: a national report on domestic abuse in Afghanistan*, Global Rights: Partners for Justice, (Global Rights, March 2008), available here: http://www.globalrights.org/site/DocServer/final_DVR_JUNE_16.pdf?docID=9803.

²¹International Development Select Committee, *Afghanistan: Development progress and prospects after 2014*, Sixth Report of Session 2012-13, (House of Commons, 2012), p. 65, available here: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmintdev/403/403.pdf>.

commitment needs to be sustained, including through the Prime Minister's co-chairship of the High Level Panel on the Post 2015 Development Agenda.²²

The APG recommends that:

- The UK should show leadership at the Commission on the Status of Women to protect existing human rights commitments and supports the call by the UN Convened Expert Group for the development of an international implementation plan to end VAWG.
- The UK should promote the inclusion of a specific target on reducing VAWG under a standalone goal on gender in the post 2015 development framework.

The Associate Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security (APG) is a cross-party parliamentary forum for the discussion and critical analysis of issues relating to women, peace and security. This includes the implementation of international human rights law, including United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960. It seeks to promote and highlight the vital role women play in peacebuilding, conflict resolution and post conflict reconstruction. The UK government reports to it on an annual basis on progress made against the *National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security* (NAP).

The APG would like to thank members of Gender Action on Peace and Security for their support in producing this evidence, in particular ActionAid, Amnesty International UK, International Rescue Committee UK, Oxfam, Saferworld and Womankind Worldwide.

For more information and to discuss further written or oral evidence, please contact Lucy Wake, the Political Advisor to the APG on apg-wps@gaps-uk.org.

²²For more information, please see J. Woodroffe and E. Esplen, Gender equality and the post-2015 framework, (Gender and Development Network, July 2012), available here: <http://www.gadnetwork.org.uk/storage/GADN%20Briefing%203%20-%20Gender%20equality%20and%20the%20post-2015%20framework.pdf>.