

# Report of the Somalia Consultation on the UK National Action Plan (NAP) for Women, Peace and Security



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Hargeisa, Somaliland

Organised by Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS)  
and CARE International

# OVERVIEW OF THE SOMALIA CONSULTATION

The UK NAP sets out how Her Majesty's Government (HMG) will implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) and all subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. It provides a framework to ensure that the provisions of UNSCRs 1325 - 2122 are incorporated into the Government's work on conflict in defence, diplomatic and development activity.

In 2013 and 2014, the UK reviewed its second NAP (2010–2013) and developed its new NAP (2014–2017). Following the launch of the new NAP in June 2014, the UK Government is developing an Implementation Plan for its Women, Peace and Security commitments.

The UK NAP includes focus countries in its Bilateral Section and reports each year on the work they have undertaken on Women, Peace and Security in 6 focus countries: Afghanistan; Democratic Republic of Congo; Libya; Myanmar; Syria; and Somalia, as well as on the other sections of the NAP. HMG supported the consultation in Somalia in order to inform the implementation of the Bilateral Section of the NAP. The objectives of the consultation were to gain civil society views on the current situation in Somalia and to outline key recommendations for HMG to implement the Somalia section of the NAP, including areas where HMG could have greatest impact, areas for collaboration with civil society and best practice that could be drawn upon. The UK government will use the consultation to inform development of an Implementation Plan for the NAP.

The consultation, facilitated by CARE with support from GAPS, brought together international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), national civil society actors, peace builders, academics, traditional and religious leaders and government officials from Somaliland and Somalia, as well as DFID and FCO representatives (see Annex 1 for the participants list). The workshop was participative, with introductory presentations to generate questions and provoke discussion for the UK NAP recommendations.

In order to facilitate informed debate, CARE and GAPS provided a briefing paper outlining the UK National Action Plan (NAP), particularly in relation to Somalia and Somaliland. Participants also received information outlining UNSCR 1325 in Somalia and were shown a CARE Somalia/Somaliland peacebuilding [documentary](#) outlining the major issues affecting village, regional and national level conflicts, as well as conflict mitigation, resolution and the mechanisms of peace building in Somalia and Somaliland<sup>1</sup>. Participants were provided with a copy of the UK's Women, Peace and Security Intervention Framework and an overview of the NAP by HMG representatives to stimulate debate. The group was divided into breakout sessions in which they discussed recommendations for the new UK NAP under the following themes: 1) prevention and protection; 2) participation and legislation; and 3) security and justice.

The organisations involved noted that it was very useful for them to come together for the consultation as, in addition to giving input on the NAP, they also gained through learning about each other's work and were able to generate ideas for future collaboration.

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<sup>1</sup> CARE Somalia-Somaliland Peace Building Documentary <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HNBfPIStPfl>

# KEY ISSUES RAISED ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY IN SOMALIA

Somalia and Somaliland are patriarchal societies. Women have poor social standing which is cemented within the clan system. *“Women are neither the clan they were born into nor are they of the clan they marry into, they are nomads.” (Somali Proverb)*. Inter-clan conflicts reinforce women’s lack of clan identity with women losing the trust of both their birth clan and their clan by marriage, further denying them access to decision-making structures within their communities. The exclusion of women in decision-making arenas is commonplace and traditional conflict resolution structures are led by the traditional Somali elders’ networks whereby the clan elders negotiate peace, arbitrate conflicts and form a court system where punishments for crimes are dealt out.

Women in Somalia are affected by violence both within the home and within the wider community. Despite the high levels of all forms of violence, women’s peacebuilding interventions have created enabling conditions for peace and development by eliminating violence between communities. Improving community-based governance and the political, social and economic position of women aims to reduce intra-community violence. Both interventions free the developmental potential of target communities and individuals, helping create peace dividends that stabilise societies further and increase the chances of continuous development and structural poverty reduction.

The breakdown of law across the Somali regions has had a negative impact on the safety and security of women. Traditionally, women were not targeted during conflict but with repeated offenses committed within the context of general lawlessness, this traditional taboo is now often broken.

Workshop participants outlined serious issues around the perpetrators of Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) who include members of the armed forces, police and AMISOM forces. Often these individuals are in positions of authority and are not held to account or brought to justice. Women are fearful of reporting VAWG and are fearful of reprisals and community backlash. There are limited female police officers who are culturally the officers who would manage cases of VAWG, and they are concentrated in towns and cities. There are few rape centres and these centres are in urban settings that are difficult for rural women to reach. They are often unable to make the journey as they cannot afford the transportation and logistical costs involved in making this journey. There is no financial aid to support survivors’ access to rape centres. There are also no correct statistics on rape which makes appropriate programming difficult.

A major restriction on international community support for participation of women is the lack of meaningful presence of donor organisation representatives in country because of security concerns leading to the related difficulties of designing programme interventions based on a first-hand understanding of realities. As a result donors are out of touch with the situation on the ground as they rarely meet with grassroots organisations and are largely restricted to the airport compound in Mogadishu. Greater efforts are needed to consult civil society and engage with Somali communities in order to truly understand their needs and the barriers to change. Thus this limits meaningful interaction with implementing agencies and civil society actors. Somaliland not being recognised causes serious gaps as the country is unable to take part in international forums and meetings. In Somaliland there is a total lack of permanent international representative presence. Fact-finding missions come to Somaliland sporadically but civil society are unaware of their purpose and do not adequately engage. To its credit, the UK government does make efforts to ensure that policy and programming is based in realities on the ground but further efforts are needed across the international community. Alternative strategies to allow engagement with government and civil society are needed and this consultation is a welcome attempt to bridge the gaps.

# KEY RECOMMENDATIONS ON PREVENTION AND PROTECTION

## **Strategic Recommendation 1:**

**In its Implementation Plan for Somalia, the UK should take a holistic approach to VAWG and incorporate it across its policy engagement and programming.**

- Basic services programming, including health and education, should incorporate VAWG considerations to enhance both protection and primary prevention. This should be supported by donors.
- Women in Somalia, since the onset of the civil war and erosion of traditionally male livelihoods, carry a disproportionate economic and labour burden within the household and in earning income to support their families, yet women often have limited decision-making power over how money is spent. Women's economic roles and responsibilities can expose them to risks both at household and community levels. Funding for long-term economic empowerment programmes is needed and this should integrate protection and prevention measures.
- The UK should also increase funding for targeted interventions to address VAWG, including counselling, training and shelters to support survivors. Nagaad Women's Network provides women with such support, which has proved effective.
- The UK government should work with the Government of Somalia and authorities in Somaliland to increase political will to tackle VAWG, commitments at policy level and processes to ensure accountability in implementation. There is a lack of political will to combat VAWG in Somalia and national policies are weak and ineffective. One group member said that *'the government is failing the community, they have the power to make a difference and until support is funded from the government then there is no prevention in VAWG'*. The international community should support the governments in the region to develop and implement their own national action plans (NAPs) and promote the importance of addressing VAWG from multiple perspectives (rights, security, development etc.) so that efforts to combat VAWG gain greater support.
- There can be risks to project participants or beneficiaries, for example, where confidentiality is not maintained in some cases or where project goals are misunderstood by community gatekeepers. Risks could be reduced by better communicating aims, objectives and organisational identities, carrying out deeper research, cultivating government and community-level support and fostering appropriate partnerships, for example with community gatekeepers.

## **Strategic Recommendation 2:**

**In its Implementation Plan for the UK NAP, the UK should promote incorporation of issues related to VAWG into formal and informal education systems and involve men and boys in programming to reduce VAWG.**

- Prevention of, and protection from VAWG should be integrated in the formal and informal education systems, particularly targeted at challenging harmful attitudes towards violence and masculinity and increasing awareness on women's rights and VAWG amongst both girls and boys. Educational curricula should cover these subjects and UK support to education in Somalia should integrate this.
- Men need to be more engaged in initiatives to tackle VAWG as VAWG will not be eradicated without changed attitudes and partnership with male allies. This includes in promoting appropriate laws and practices, both to address VAWG specifically and to change perceptions of women's status in Somali society and within the family.
- Awareness campaigns are needed to engage community gate keepers, religious and traditional leaders who are primarily men, as well as young boys through traditional channels and social media campaigns. The UK should support such campaigns.

### **Strategic Recommendation 3:**

**The international community should support a holistic approach to VAWG, women's access to VAWG services in longer-term prevention programmes, and delivered through partnerships with both government and civil society.**

- The international community should support women's access to VAWG services through long-term projects developed in consultation with communities and civil society to ensure appropriateness to the context. VAWG services should also engage civil society and beneficiaries/users in monitoring mechanisms to ensure effectiveness.
- Prevention of VAWG requires long-term attitudinal and behaviour change and cannot be achieved through short-term interventions only. Civil society and government institutions need to work in partnership, with sustained support from the international community to develop appropriate response mechanisms on both the demand and the supply sides of service provision.
- 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.
- Women are also often unaware of their rights or the services available to them and awareness raising with women must be an integral part of any programming.
- 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.

### **Strategic Recommendation 4:**

**The UK government should support Women's Rights Organisations' role promoting prevention and protection, including facilitating greater linkages with the international community.**

- Women's Rights Organisations are active in projects and programmes that are put in place to support victims and survivors. They provide a wide range of services, including safe spaces for survivors of VAWG, and community awareness training which includes dialogue. This work can be supported by strengthening Women's Rights Organisations capacity in policy development, advocacy and networking with international platforms in addition to long-term, sustainable funding for the services they provide.
- Women's Rights Organisations need to have a strong voice in order to promote women as change agents not just as victims, and for women to be recognised as contributors to society through business, peacebuilding and social development. It is important that their advocacy capacity is supported and that they are given platforms to demonstrate women's participation.
- The UK government should further promote the full participation of Women's Rights Organisations alongside broader Somali civil society in developing, delivering and monitoring peacebuilding programmes. Currently funding to support women in peacebuilding is available, with DFID, USAID, EC and DANIDA all viewing this issue as important. However, some participants were concerned that funding is limited to International NGOs who subcontract Local NGOs to support implementation and risks programmes not being rooted in local experience.
- The UK Government should continue to consult with Women's Rights Organisations in Somalia and Somaliland in the development, monitoring and evaluation of the UK's NAP to ensure that it makes use of in-country expertise and local needs. A plan for this should be outlined and budgeted for in the NAP.
- The international community should implement specific measures to reduce risks to women activists and human rights defenders as well as programme participants and implementers. There are dangers associated with the outreach and community awareness aspects of the women's rights and empowerment work. Women activists and implementers should be protected. The UK should increase efforts to build protection measures into all programmes and, where possible, support implementation of the EU Human Rights Defenders Guidelines.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS ON PARTICIPATION:

### **Strategic Recommendation 5:**

#### **The UK government should support greater involvement of Somali women in peace and conflict prevention at grassroots, national and international levels**

- Somali society is fractured along clan lines and clan allegiance supersedes loyalties to government. In Somalia and Somaliland, women have complex clan status as they often join a different clan upon marriage which allows them to have relationships with different groups/clans in times of conflict. Women have the potential to use their unique position to bring warring clans together, mobilise their communities towards dialogue (including the youth), and to support peace processes by acting as intermediates between clans (although this position is not officially recognised by the clan hierarchy). The UK government could make greater efforts to recognise the roles of Somali women as valid within wider peace processes and to ensure financial and political support at all levels to enable them to undertake these roles.
- Women can also play negative roles in conflict as high rates of illiteracy and a lack of education and awareness leaves them vulnerable to manipulation. At the household level women may encourage their children to take part in conflict by taking part in long-held Somali traditions such as reiterating to their sons that they must be 'manly' and reciting poems and songs to reinforce this warrior mentality.<sup>2</sup> These negative aspects of Somali women's roles in conflict also need to be mitigated with targeted interventions. When funding work to promote peace at the grassroots level, the UK government should ensure that this engages women who are marginalised to enhance the role of those active in peace, and mitigate against behaviours which can exacerbate conflict.

### **Strategic Recommendation 6:**

#### **The UK's NAP Implementation Plan, the UK should support the role Women's Rights Organisations undertake in supporting women's participation in Somalia and Somaliland.**

- Women's Rights Organisations operate across Somalia and Somaliland and actively advocate for policies that address the economic and political challenges women face, including women's participation in all levels of governance, the economy and society. Women's Rights Organisations that support women's role in peacebuilding should be supported financially as well as given opportunities to participate in key consultations and debates. In implementing its new NAP, the UK should fund and support this central work.

### **Strategic Recommendation 7:**

#### **The international community should support the increased participation of women within governance structures at all levels and in elections.**

Across Somalia, women are largely absent from all levels of governance.

- In South Central Somalia there is a quota for women's parliamentary seats which is not enforced. The international community should increase efforts to influence and monitor its implementation, providing funds or appropriate opportunities to engage women and challenge barriers to realising their participation in line with legal mandates.
- In Somaliland there are proposals to introduce a 25% quota for women's parliamentary seats. The international community should make efforts to pressure the Government of Somaliland to introduce this legally. This should include providing funding and/or facilitation of public platforms for Women's Rights Organisations who advocate for the quota and support to help them mobilise grassroots women to pressure government to implement the quota. Currently, many women support the quota conceptually but clan allegiances and conformity to cultural norms prevents this support being vocalised publicly. It is also essential that support for a women's quota is also built amongst men,

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<sup>2</sup> CARE Somalia-Somaliland: Understanding the Conflict Dynamics in Sool and Sanaag Regions: Millicent Otjeno, 2011

especially current parliamentarians, other male office bearers and elders. Male counterparts need to be trained to understand the importance of women's participation in all sectors of life and the benefits of greater gender equality to society as a whole.

- In both Somalia and Somaliland, the international community should also fund capacity building programmes of women parliamentary candidates and members of parliament to ensure that their participation has positive outcomes and that they can negotiate their interests once in positions of power. Support could be in the form of developing a mentoring system by engaging with parliamentarians, providing targeted capacity building. Messages to convey the benefits across society of women's participation should be conveyed in addition to a discourse around rights. This should be incorporated into all governance related programming.
- In Somaliland, politics is characterised as 'clan democracy'. The international community declared Somaliland's elections in 2002 and 2010 to be free and fair yet these elections followed clan lines with well-orchestrated inter-clan partnerships and support for political parties. In Somalia, clan allegiances are even more robust. Political factions are made up of the major clans, resulting in the marginalisation of minor clans from the political dialogue. Greater participation of women may help shift such allegiances, albeit slowly, and enable political discourse around issues that transcend clan lines to grow. Having trained women active within governance systems enables them to develop policy that can better protect women in development, governance, security and justice mechanisms.
- In addition to seeking and fulfilling political office, the international community should make greater efforts to ensure women's full, free and informed participation in elections. The Somalia and Somaliland constitutions both guarantee men and women equal rights to participate fully in all aspects of the political process. However, it is often hard for women to exercise these rights. There are barriers to women's participation, most notably the clan system and the patriarchal social structure. As a result, investment is required to ensure their rights are realised. Targeted civic education for both men and women is needed based on consultation to identify specific barriers to women's participation in elections. The international community should support such civil education initiatives.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS ON LEGISLATION AND SECURITY AND JUSTICE:

### **Strategic Recommendation 8:**

**The international community should provide targeted support to increase the participation of women in security and justice mechanisms, through increased numbers of police stations offering VAWG services and increased numbers of female officers in appropriate positions who receive the full support of their peers. These measures would help to make security and justice mechanisms accessible to more women and ensure that their needs are met.**

- The international community should champion Somali women's access to justice on an international platform and at high level donor discussions. This support should not be rhetoric-orientated but with tangible evidence and development programmes that are reflective of this support. Women's access to peace, security and justice needs to be mainstreamed throughout projects. The international community should fund training and support to increase the number of women officers in the police, judiciary and governance structures at all levels. Increased numbers of women are needed on the front desk in police stations and women officers who are trained and mandated to undertake community outreach and work with women survivors of all forms of VAWG so that there is a safe-space for reporting cases of VAWG.
- Further they should fund and promote:
  - Programmes targeted to help women lawyers engage at the district level;
  - Training for women police at community and district levels;

- Capacity-building for women lawyers to prosecute cases of VAWG in South Central Somalia and Somaliland;
  - Gender-sensitive training for all law enforcement agencies in collaboration with Women's Rights Organisations.
- The International Community should provide specific support for women within the police, judiciary and community structures in order to achieve attitudinal change towards women undertaking these roles. Judicial and security sector capacity-building programmes that include components on gender sensitivity awareness and promotion should be institutionalised across the security sector.
  - Programme funds should provide for the creation of gender sensitive working environments and Human Resources policies that also provide attractive salaries to increase female recruitment and promote retention.

### **Strategic Recommendation 9:**

**The international community should promote legislative reform in both Somalia and Somaliland to ensure that women are part of political decision-making processes and that their needs are reflected in new laws.**

- A constitutional review is needed to provide a legal framework for women to be part of the political decision-making process, whether as political office post-holders. A National Task Force to advocate for this should include the Justice Minister and be a women-led committee. The international community could fund a constitutional review as well as providing technical expertise and capacity building opportunities for parliamentarians and civil society actors. A review of the constitution would support the quota for parliamentary seats for women, participation in elections and also allow for real dialogue on crucial issues to take place as part of the legislative process.
- Support for broader governance reform should include clear gender dimensions, for example, decentralisation of authority and decision making to regional and district level which should include efforts to increase participation of women at district level. Changes in legal structures and staffing at different levels need to be accompanied by efforts to stimulate dialogue within religious and traditional bodies in order to achieve broad support for these changes.
- Education on the VAWG provisions in the constitution and dialogue at the grassroots level is needed to gain support and behavioural change for appropriate laws and response mechanisms.
- Better national level integration is needed through gender mainstreaming in government ministries especially the ministries of Interior and Justice. Funding needs to be reflective of this and political support needs to be grown.
- Across the Somali-speaking regions the cultural norm is for VAWG cases to be dealt with through traditional mechanisms whereas formal legal mechanisms are seen as inefficient and untrustworthy. The traditional mechanisms involve elders negotiating for diya (blood money) payments for the crime. Perpetrators are not held accountable but the collective clan contributes to these payments. International donors should support strengthening policy and practice so that the legal system is trusted and used in place of the traditional system. Men need to be seen as allies in this shift in norms.
- Women are often silent in cases of VAWG as male relatives advocate for them. This leads to serious gaps in information with women unable to provide evidence, which in turn impedes justice and perpetuates cycles of shame. The UK government could fund training for key office-bearers and wider communities in survivor-centred approaches to ensure that men are not the gatekeepers in responses to VAWG.

# ANNEX 1: BACKGROUND ON ORGANISING PARTNERS

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

Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) is the UK's Women, Peace and Security Network. As a coalition of UK-based development, humanitarian, human rights and peacebuilding organisations, GAPS promotes and monitors the inclusion of Women, Peace and Security in all UK conflict prevention, security and peacebuilding policies, systems, programmes and funding. GAPS has been working with the British Government since 2006 on the development of the UK NAPs, other Women, Peace and Security policies, systems and programmes, and conflict policy.

## **CARE Somalia/Somaliland**

Operating in Somalia since 1981, CARE International works in all three regions of Somalia: Puntland, Somaliland and South-Central Somalia. CARE Somalia's overall aim is to achieve sustainable change in the lives of Somali women, girls and youth, supporting them to access education, play a stronger role in decision making, and become more resilient to the cycle of droughts and conflict in the Somali setting. CARE places a strong emphasis on peace building, governance and institutional development in its programming, working with nascent government bodies at all levels across the regions of Somalia to re-establish functioning institutions that can meet the needs of especially vulnerable parts of the community.

CARE Somalia is currently working on three main programs: 1) the Rural Vulnerable Women's Program which supports poor rural women and girls in addressing long-term underlying causes of poverty and vulnerability, addressing social, economic, cultural and political obstacles to positive change (helping women and girls improve their economic status, access education and support them to play a greater role in local leadership and conflict resolution); 2) the Urban Youth Program which focuses on job creation and livelihood opportunities for poor youth (through education, vocational training, small business development, and microfinance); 3) the Emergency Program which provides direct humanitarian relief to victims of drought and conflict in Puntland, Mogadishu, and Lower Juba.

CARE is a member of the GAPS network and the consultation in Somalia/Somaliland was organised by CARE Somalia/Somaliland in liaison with GAPS.