



gender action for peace and security

Statement of Solidarity with our BPOC colleagues in Action Aid UK

February 2022

Following reports from [Civil Society News](#) and [Third Sector](#), GAPS is greatly concerned to learn that Black people and people of colour (BPOC) colleagues at ActionAid UK (AAUK), in particular black women and women of colour, have been subjected to systemic racism within their organisation. It is devastating to hear that when BPOC colleagues at AAUK have spoken out on their own experiences of racism and microaggressions, that they have been faced with “systematic denial, disbelief or indifference”. A culture of silence has prevailed where BPOC have been ignored.

The internal audit that was conducted at AAUK revealed a range of issues that BPOC staff have faced, including being “less valued”, being given access to “less... opportunities” compared to their White colleagues, and being labelled as “overly aggressive”. AAUK presents itself as an anti-racist and feminist organisation, through its support of the “[Statement of Solidarity](#)” released by GADN and publishing their “[Ten Principles of Feminist Leadership](#)”, however it is clear that AAUK have failed in putting their own words into action.

GAPS acknowledges that white supremacy, colonialism and unequal power structures are embedded within the very fabric of the international development sector. BPOC are continually facing the consequences of a sector that is failing to protect them, and a sector that is refusing to do the work to dismantle the unequal power structures that exist. If the sector is committed to dismantling white saviourism and systemic racism globally, this work must be done internally as well as externally. We know that the reports from AAUK are not an anomaly, and while GAPS is working hard to dismantle inequality in the sector, we acknowledge that we also operate and exist within these inherent structures.

The GAPS secretariat and management board write this statement in solidarity with BPOC at AAUK. We recognise the undue stress and hardship that speaking about racism can do to our BPOC peers and colleagues, and as a network will continue to provide safe spaces for staff from member organisations to discuss their experiences, share lessons and put these into action. GAPS’ strategy is centred around anti-racism

and intersectional feminism, we expect our members to embrace these values, and we stand ready to support member organisations and their staff in this process.

GAPS calls upon the senior leadership team within AAUK to take collective responsibility for enabling a culture that tolerates racism and put into place accountability mechanisms so that staff experiencing discrimination can report their concerns in a way that is safe and keeps them protected from harm. The senior leadership team within AAUK must listen and work with BPOC and put concrete actions in place to spearhead change.

Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS)