

**The UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security:**  
**Womankind position on February 2012 revision**

**Background – UNSCR 1325 and the UK National Action Plan**

The central role of women in conflict has been recognised by the United Nations (UN) through the adoption in 2000 of Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on Women, Peace and Security. This ground-breaking resolution addresses the disproportionate and specific impact of armed conflict on women; recognises the under-valued and under-utilised contribution women make to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peace building; and stresses the importance of women’s equal and full participation as active agents in building peace and security.

Launched in November 2010, the UK National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 (NAP) is intended to strengthen government’s ability to reduce the impact of conflict on women and girls and to promote their inclusion in conflict resolution. It provides a framework to ensure that UNSCR 1325 is incorporated into government’s work on conflict in defence, diplomatic and development activity.

After a process of consultation with civil society, in the UK as well as Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Nepal, the NAP was revised and re-launched in February 2012. The 2012 revision makes commitments to further implement UNSCR 1325 in UK diplomatic, development and defence policy, through training, programmes and operations.

This paper welcomes the NAP revisions, and sets out recommendations for key next steps in its implementation.

**Welcome developments in Women, Peace and Security commitments**

Womankind Worldwide chairs the Gender Action for Peace and Security coalition (GAPS). We welcomed the opportunity to participate in the consultation and revision process. There has been a good level of engagement with civil society, both in the UK and in the countries of the bi-lateral sections. There has been increased accountability to parliamentarians, through the reporting on the NAP to the Associate Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security. There is continued active engagement in the NAP revision and implementation process through the regular meetings of the cross-Whitehall working group. The revision process has been responsive to swiftly changing circumstances and civil society’s expertise and input, evidenced by the new section on Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and significant strengthening of the existing bi-lateral sections.

**Recommendations for next steps**

The UK government has established itself as a strong and credible leader on Women, Peace and Security issues, from its original support to UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions through to the development and revision of UK NAPs. We support and welcome this commitment and hope that the government will continue to be strong advocates for Women, Peace and Security.

We note however, that for the principles and good intentions of the NAP to positively impact on the lives of women affected by conflict, and to increase the participation of women in peacebuilding, they must be accompanied by concrete actions. Whilst the three departments have made a commendable start in implementation, we make recommendations for next steps in three key areas:

- cross-government co-ordination and policy coherence;
- consultation with women’s rights organisations; and
- earmarked funding within existing resources.

## *Cross-government coordination and policy coherence*

Womankind welcomes the efforts of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Department for International Development (DFID) and Ministry of Defence (MOD) to work closely and collaboratively together on Women, Peace and Security. We particularly commend the objective that “All staff working on conflict issues across FCO, MOD and DFID departments are aware of the Women, Peace and Security agenda and receive specialist training, when appropriate”.

This need for broader understanding amongst DFID, FCO and MOD staff of the UK’s commitments to Women, Peace and Security was highlighted recently in the run-up to the London Conference on Somalia, when the draft outcomes communiqué had only minimal mention of women’s rights, and no provisions for participation of women in building peace. After lobbying from Somali women’s organisations and NGOs working on women’s rights in Somalia, the final communiqué included “women must be part of the political process”. It also called for “action to address in particular the grave human rights violations and abuses that women and children face.” This was a great improvement and a welcome commitment, but the provisions of the NAP should mean this action is not needed and that women’s rights are at the heart of all UK conflict and peacebuilding policies, plans and activities from their inception. We recommend that specific training on Women, Peace and Security is rolled out with urgency to all staff in DFID, FCO and MOD whose portfolio covers working on or in fragile and conflict-affected states. This training could build on the FCO toolkit for overseas posts on 1325 that was disseminated recently.

The NAP’s commitment to “ensure policy coherence across HMG, particularly with the implementation of the Building Stability Overseas Strategy and the UK’s National Action Plan on Violence Against Women” is promising. Womankind welcomes the increasing linkages, both in Whitehall and in parliament, between Women, Peace and Security policy and discourse, and broader conflict policy and discourse. For instance the recent Joint Ministerial briefing on the Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS) to the House of Commons (14 March 2012) included specific mention on Women, Peace and Security. The House of Lords debate on BSOS (November 2011) had several detailed contributions on women’s rights, from a broad range of peers. We also welcome the role that Minister Lynne Featherstone MP, the overseas champion on eliminating violence against women and girls, can play in raising awareness of Women, Peace and Security issues across parliament, government and the public and ensuring policy coherence across government departments.

However, challenges remain in implementing the principles of the NAP into broader conflict policy. Womankind is actively engaging in the civil society consultation process for the Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS), in which there are few concrete commitments to women’s participation in building peace or tackling violence against women and girls. Furthermore, the draft guidelines on Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS), a product of the BSOS, make no mention of Women, Peace and Security in conflict analysis. We welcome the commitment in the revised NAP to ensure that JACS includes Women, Peace and Security in its analytical approach. We therefore recommend swift action is taken to ensure that this objective is reached. Furthermore we hope that the NAP Cross-Whitehall working group will be actively involved in the BSOS process and broader conflict and peacebuilding policy discussions.

## *Consulting with women’s rights organisations*

Womankind welcomes the consultation with civil society and national governments through the NAP revision process, and further welcomes the commitment to annual reporting. It is important to continue and broaden the dialogue with women’s rights organisations<sup>1</sup> in fragile and conflict-affected states, who are often at the forefront of delivering services to women, and advocating for inclusion in reconstruction and peacebuilding processes.

---

<sup>1</sup> It is important to be clear about what constitutes “women’s rights organisations”. This refers to women-led organisations with a strong commitment to gender equality and advancing women’s social, economic, political and legal rights. Women’s rights organisations comprise a huge spectrum and diversity. Some work primarily at the grassroots level where they know target communities. Others are active in advocacy and accountability and work at national, regional and international levels. Many women’s rights organisations in fragile and conflict-affected states provide critical services to women affected by conflict or violence, such as shelters or legal assistance.

Moving forward with the National Action Plan, the government should continue its work to build links with a broad range of women's rights organisations and women's rights activists at all levels. The existing relationship between the UK government and UK civil society is an excellent conduit through which to make these links overseas. The welcome commitment to develop a full MENA regional plan is a particular opportunity to ensure that women's rights activists in the MENA region, who have been at the forefront of the Arab Uprisings, are able to fully engage in the development of UK work on Women, Peace and Security in the region. Furthermore, the consultation events held in Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Nepal last year should be replicated – learning from the experience to include a broad range of relevant actors including UK government, national government, civil society and other relevant stakeholders such as UN and World Bank. It is vital that there is continued engagement with relevant actors and civil society in-country to inform activities, for monitoring and impact purposes and to ensure coherence (and avoid duplication) in policy and activities.

### *Funding for Women, Peace and Security work*

The NAP states that “there are a number of avenues for funding of Women, Peace and Security projects and expenditure is drawn from a variety of budgets across the three government departments, including the Conflict Pool, FCO Human Rights and Democracy Fund, DFID programme funding and Arab Partnership funding.”

Whilst we welcome this commitment to funding Women, Peace and Security work, we recommend that moving forward the government reviews how this funding can be streamlined, how expenditure on Women, Peace and Security-specific activities can be tracked and monitored, and how to ensure that funding reaches women's rights organisations in fragile and conflict-affected states.

Given the growing recognition of the importance of funding women's rights organisations, innovative donor practices and approaches<sup>2</sup> are emerging in response. There is a willingness among a range of donors to explore new and innovative processes and channels to reach women's rights organisations in conflict-affected areas, and reflect greater recognition of the important role that women's rights organisations play. For full implementation of the National Action Plan, the government should look into other donor approaches in order to find the best way to provide vital support to women's rights organisations working on Women, Peace and Security at national and local levels. This should be combined with efforts to engage national governments on the importance of funding women's rights organisations. Furthermore, there is innovative work going on with a number of donors interested in Women, Peace and Security, such as the Netherlands, on alternative financing mechanisms for the implementation of NAPs<sup>3</sup>. We urge the UK government to explore these further and Womankind would be happy to assist or engage in developing ideas on this.

## **Contact Womankind**

We would be pleased to discuss this response in more detail, and can provide verbal briefings or further information on specific aspects of Women, Peace and Security. Please contact us if we can be of assistance.

Mairi MacRae - Head of Policy and Advocacy: [mairi@womankind.org.uk](mailto:mairi@womankind.org.uk), 020 7549 0369

Lee Webster - Policy and Advocacy Manager: [lee@womankind.org.uk](mailto:lee@womankind.org.uk), 020 7549 0566

Website: [www.womankind.org.uk](http://www.womankind.org.uk)

---

<sup>2</sup> See DANIDA's support for The Africa Women's Development Fund (AWDF); Irish Aid; MDG3 Fund set up by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

<sup>3</sup> Cabrera-Balleza, Mavic and Popovic, Nicola; (2011); *Costing and Financing 1325*; published by Cordaid and ICAN-GNWP.