

Submission to the Strategic Defence and Security Review

September 2010

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 GAPS welcome this opportunity to make recommendations to the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR). Our comments will focus on the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and its associated resolutions, 1820 (2008), 1888 and 1889 (2009) on women, peace and security, and the need for the provisions of these documents to be fully integrated into HM Government's defence and security policy.
- 1.2 Specifically, our comments and recommendations will focus on (a) conflict prevention, (b) the UK's national policy and security architecture, (c) the protection of women and girls in conflict affected areas, (d) prevention of sexual and gender based violence, and (e) women's participation in peacebuilding and decision making. Each section of this submission is accompanied by appropriate recommendations for inclusion in the SDSR.
- 1.3 Broadly speaking, HM Government has a strong record on women, peace and security issues: the UK was instrumental in the passage of UN Security Council resolutions on the agenda. The UK was one of the first to develop a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP) setting out a strategy to implement the resolutions. **This positive record on women, peace and security must be reflected in the outcome of the SDSR, which should make explicit reference to women, peace and security, as well as mainstreaming a gender perspective throughout the outcome.**
- 1.4 **We welcome HM Government's vision of an integrated approach to security and defence issues across relevant departments.** This undertaking is highlighted both in the March 2010 Ministry of Defence green paper² and the Conservative Party's green paper on national security³. There should be a clear recognition that each of the three internationally focused departments (MOD, FCO and DFID) brings different skills, expertise and objectives to the table. The pursuance of a strong gendered approach should not be limited to a single government department. **A unified government approach should recognise the crucial position of women and girls in conflict situations and the central role that they must play in building sustainable peace.** Moreover, a gendered understanding of conflict which recognises the differential impact of conflict on men and women should be integrated into all UK interventions in conflict affected societies and fragile states, be they diplomatic, developmental or military.
- 1.5 We welcome the recognition by the MOD, outlined in the recent green paper, that domestic security cannot be separated from international security.⁴ However, the UK must also continue to target interventions in poor countries where there is no immediate strategic political or security interest. More equitable societies will lead to the sustainable maintenance of international peace and security. As acknowledged in *A Resilient Nation – addressing poverty, inequality and poor governance* will encourage long-term stability and improve the life chances of people in fragile societies and poorer countries.⁵

¹ For information about GAPS, see page 7.

² Adaptability and Partnership: Issues for the Strategic Defence Review

³ A Resilient Nation

⁴ Adaptability and Partnership, pp. 13.

⁵ A resilient nation p. 18

- 1.6 **The women, peace and security perspective should be central to the UK's defence and security policy because it will also lead to more sustainable and peaceful societies.** More than half of resolved conflicts return to arms within ten years.⁶ At the heart of this problem lie deeply flawed peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts, which often exclude half of the population: women. Furthermore, research suggests that where there is acute gender discrimination and abuses of human rights, specifically women's rights, societies are likely to be more unstable.⁷ It is also recognised that most intrastate conflicts occur in areas where gender inequality is extreme.⁸ The defence green paper recognises that the "go first, go fast and go home" approach does not work. GAPS strongly support this statement, as it recognises that if interventions are to be successful in bringing peace, the methodology must be longer-term. Central to this, is an inclusive post-conflict approach that addresses the needs of the whole of society, which is why the women, peace and security perspective is important for all of HM Government's work.

2. CONFLICT PREVENTION

- 2.1 GAPS welcome the focus in *A Resilient Nation* on conflict prevention. Conflict prevention strategies which fail to include the goal of gender equality risk undermining the prospects of a sustainable peace. Furthermore, they weaken the protection of women in the event of further conflict (this is explored further in section 4).
- 2.2 Conflict prevention needs to account for the resurgence of previous conflict. The link between women's exclusion and recurrence of conflict has been recognised in UNSCR 1325 and elsewhere. Any agreement which does not contain specific provisions for women is discriminatory. This was one of the key factors prohibiting the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol (November 1994) and the resultant return to arms in Angola in late 1998. Had that agreement been inclusive of the entire population, the risk of a return to conflict would have been significantly reduced.⁹
- 2.3 Conflict prevention and post-conflict stabilisation activities, the majority of which are non-military in their nature, are essential for the UK's defence, security and development policy. This should not only take into account theatres where the UK's Armed Forces are engaged, but areas where there is civilian suffering and significant risk of conflict. It is far more effective, as well as cost-effective, to ensure that conflict is prevented and the need for subsequent intervention is avoided. To do so successfully, it is important that the MOD, FCO and DFID as well as other relevant departments take a gendered perspective into account in their analysis of potential conflict areas and the planning of interventions.
- 2.4 **HM Government should:**
- 2.5.1 **Ensure that strategy and resources not only focus on countries where the UK has a military presence.** Conflict prevention and post-conflict stabilisation require a focus on addressing inequality and promoting the development of human security, accountability and respect for human rights – particularly women's rights.
- 2.5.2 **Recognise the importance of gender equality** as a central component of the UK's work on conflict prevention as well as in the government's wider security and defence policy. For example, one of the military's indicators for success should be the impact on violence against women and women's security that UK missions have in country such that the protection of women is a core objective of any operation.

⁶ GAPS, <http://www.gaps-uk.org/docs/Parliamentarian%5C%27s%20guide.pdf>

⁷ Caprioli, Mary (2003) Gender Equality and Civil Wars, CPR Working Paper No. 8, World Bank <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTCPR/214578-1111996036679/20482367/WP8trxtsep3.pdf>

⁸ Caprioli, M. "Primed for Violence: The Role of Gender Inequality in Predicting Internal Conflict." *International Studies Quarterly* 49 (2), p.161-178.

⁹ Donald Steinberg, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/southern-africa/angola/failing-to-empower-women-peacebuilders-a-cautionary-tale-from-angola.aspx>

2.5.3 Promote and support women's participation in peace processes.

3. NATIONAL SECURITY STRUCTURES

3.1 To date, the lines of responsibility for the government's work on women, peace and security have been blurred and unstructured. The current SDSR provides a clear opportunity for this to be addressed and rectified. Setting out clear lines of responsibility and departmental contact points, and naming senior staff as women, peace and security champions (such as the current 'gender champions' in DFID), should be considered as part of the SDSR. This would improve visibility and accountability.

3.2 Staff capacity for central coordination of the UK's work on women, peace and security – namely the NAP – has been severely limited across government departments. Responsibility for the drafting and coordination for the NAP lies within FCO; however staff members from other departments, particularly MOD, are also responsible for the Plan's implementation and adequate provisions for this cross-government strategy need to be in place.

3.3 HM Government should:

3.3.1 **Appoint an international Violence Against Women Minister with responsibility for women, peace and security** included explicitly in their portfolio. This minister should have a seat on the National Security Council and ensure that women, peace and security perspectives are taken into account within the NSC.

3.3.2 **Clarify lines of responsibility within government departments** to determine who is responsible for women, peace and security. Senior staff, at Director level, should be appointed as gender champions across internationally focused departments. These staff should have women, peace and security built into their performance objectives and be monitored as part of the appraisal process.

3.3.3 **Increase the amount of staff time** dedicated to the implementation of the NAP. This would allow for better coordination of work across government and monitoring of activities undertaken pursuant to the Plan.

4.1 PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN CONFLICT

4.1 Whilst armed conflict exacerbates violence against women and girls, it is important to note that, even where there is no armed conflict, women and girls continue to be subject to serious human rights violations. However conflict, particularly armed conflict, often serves to exacerbate discrimination and violence against women and girls¹⁰. Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) – including rape, forced impregnation, forced abortion, trafficking, sexual slavery, and the spread of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS – is one of the defining characteristics of contemporary armed conflict¹¹ and is committed by a wide range of actors, including military and peacekeepers. It is for this reason that rape has been recognised as a weapon of war, and violence against women and girls in conflicts has been defined as both a war crime and a crime against humanity.¹² Similar to men and boys, women and girls also risk abduction and forced recruitment by armed groups.

¹⁰ *Women, Peace and Security*, Study submitted by the Secretary General pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), 2002, at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/eWPS.pdf>

¹¹ <http://www.unhcr.org/47cfab342.html>

¹² Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

4.3 The UK was instrumental in the passage of UN Security Council resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889 – all of which mandate the protection of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict contexts. Despite these high-level commitments and a number of achievements, such as the development of the NAP and the strong role that HM Government has played in pushing to incorporate gender perspectives into UN Peacekeeping operations, women and girls in conflict continue to face discrimination and violence.

4.4 **HM Government should:**

4.4.1 **Ensure gender training for the Ministry of Defence (MOD):** More comprehensive and context specific gender training needs to be delivered as part of the MOD pre-deployment as well as ongoing training. This should include an overview of the situation for women's right in-country and how troops and their actions may impact on women's rights and safety, as well as ongoing monitoring to assess impact of activities. Some of the specific areas for training include the protection of women, prevention of violence against women and supporting access to justice and recourse for survivors. Deployed personnel should also be trained on responding to rape as a weapon of war just as they are trained on other weaponry. The amount of gender training with specific inclusion of the provisions of UNSCR 1325 and 1820 received by all military and deployable personnel should be reviewed and increased.

4.4.2 **Increase funding for gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping and field operations:** MOD should review and increase the proportion of military spending which is allocated to gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping and field operations. Gender advisors should be included in all field operations. They should be experienced, have seniority and their own discreet budget. Moreover, HM Government should also ensure that gender advisors play a strategic role, incorporating a gender perspective into every aspect of the peacekeeping mission. The advisors' role should not be limited to gender training of peacekeepers.

4.4.3 **Provide specific protection for women involved in political processes:** Specific resources and funding should be dedicated to protecting both female political candidates, as well as women who wish to vote in local and national elections. For example, the Armed Forces should play a role in the protection of both female candidates and female voters in the elections in Afghanistan in September 2010.

4.4.4 **Use international influence** in the EU, NATO and Security Council to ensure the protection of women in conflict is a core objective – particularly by ensuring that all Security Council mandated peacekeeping operations include gender in their terms of reference; pushing for all mandates for peacekeeping missions to guarantee the engagement of women on a regular basis; pressing for the EU to ensure that its conflict work includes engagement with women in their mandates and ensuring UNSCR 1325 is included in NATO doctrine, as it is now in UK military doctrine. In areas in which there are alleged human rights violations the UK must ensure existing peacekeeping operations are mandated to monitor human rights. Anomalies – such as MINURSO, the only contemporary peacekeeping mission with no mandate to monitor human rights – should be rectified.

4.4.5 **Ensure that protection is based on context specific evidence and local knowledge:** Social and gender analysis should be a key aspect to HM Government's understanding of conflict and planning of interventions. Secondary research and analysis is vital, but upon deployment, time and resources should be invested into speaking with representatives of different social groups, including women, to build understanding. Deployed staff across HM Government should work closely with protection advisers to assess vulnerability and to carry out gender sensitive investigations into human rights violations. All analysis and investigation should be rooted in dialogue with local

communities, particularly with local women's organisations and movements, and should be ongoing and responsive to change.

5. PREVENTION OF SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (SGBV)

- 5.1 Physical and sexual violence, particularly against women, continues to be a well-documented feature of armed conflict. SGBV can often reinforce existing conflict dynamics – preventing and reducing SGBV can play an important role in reducing the overall level and longevity of conflict.
- 5.2 Effective responses to SGBV are vital. Without an effective response to SGBV, not only will survivors go unaided, but fewer women will report violence and abuse, there will be inaccurate data on the scale, extent and trends of abuse, and women will be less able to contribute political and economic capital to rebuild the community and economy.
- 5.3 SGBV is largely a symptom of more fundamental problems with regards to women's inequality, including impunity; inadequate access justice and security services; and, low levels of participation in public life. Preventing and reducing SGBV should be based on longer term development initiatives that address women's inequality.
- 5.4 **HM Government should:**
 - 5.4.1 **Develop a cross-departmental strategy to support SGBV survivors** that clarifies how, and by whom, wider support to SGBV survivors will be provided.
 - 5.4.2 **Prioritise the support of basic services for survivors of SGBV** alongside longer-term funding of access to justice and Security Sector Reform (SSR) initiatives necessary to tackle impunity. As a priority, the UK should support survivors of conflict-related violence, especially SGBV through programmes which provide basic services, such as health, psycho-social and livelihood support. This is particularly important as women's unique gynaecological and reproductive health concerns are often overlooked in conflict contexts. Funding should be channelled to organisations, particularly women's organisations that can provide services and training about the consequences of SGBV.¹³
 - 5.4.3 **Use diplomatic channels to end impunity for perpetrators of SGBV.** The UK should advance the end to impunity for perpetrators of SGBV particularly in the DRC, support government accountability, assist the improved implementation of legislation on violence against women and ensure that MONUSCO, and other peacekeeping operations, have the appropriate resources to protect civilians, especially women and girls.

6. WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING AND PEACEBUILDING

- 6.1 Women must be supported to participate in all decision-making processes and as peacebuilding actors. When women's participation is weak, this has resulted in regression of women's rights (for example, in Afghanistan, where proposals to adopt family codes and other laws have had a negative impact on women's rights). Women's participation in decision-making is not merely in order to respect equality and a rights-based approach. Economic development, sustainable peace and reconstruction will be more durable and sustainable when they are more inclusive and women's rights are upheld.
- 6.2 An evaluation of DFID's development assistance to conflict and post-conflict reconstruction found that conflict resolution would be greatly improved *'if critical linkages were made between*

¹³ This is in addition to the services the UK might be obliged to provide under the Geneva Conventions and its additional protocols.

*the macro 'hard' security processes such as Security Sector Reform (SSR) and the local level work of women's peacebuilding networks in disarmament and community peace building.*¹⁴

6.3 Further to this, HM Government has not pushed for the involvement of women at international, national and local level talks on conflict prevention, resolution, security, reconstruction and reintegration. The most recent examples of this are the London Conference on Afghanistan in January this year, and the more recent donor conference in Kabul where only one woman civil society representative was given access to address the plenary.

6.4 **HM Government should:**

6.4.1 Security and justice:

6.4.1.1 **Support women's involvement in security and justice provision:** HM Government should support more women judges to sit in all types of courts. Furthermore, HM Government should address gender imbalances in security and police forces. Any security and justice training – such as police training in Afghanistan – should ensure women's involvement.

6.4.1.2 **Prioritise access to justice:** HM Government's approach to SSR should prioritise human security for women in relation to their access to formal, participatory and representative judicial mechanisms.

6.4.1.3 **Ensure gender parity in security decision making:** HM Government should take practical steps to ensure greater gender parity in security decision making, ensuring women are fully involved in decision-making and other activities informing DDR processes. Such mechanisms include rosters of female security experts, consultative committees, and more deliberate recruitment processes.

6.4.1.4 **Recognise and highlight the role of women and girls in DDR:** The UK should explicitly highlight the role of women and girls in disarmament initiatives. The UK must support planners of DDR to include provision for female ex-combatants as a sizeable group based on needs assessment in each context. HM Government should also facilitate the collection of gender disaggregated data to develop a more accurate picture of knowledge of women ex-fighters and dependents.

6.4.1.5 **Provide support for gender sensitive legislation:** Support the development of gender sensitive and regulatory national frameworks including inheritance, property and labour laws.

6.4.2 Governance:

6.4.2.1 **Demand the meaningful participation of women at all levels of discussion on conflict:** demand the participation of women at international, national and local levels in talks on conflict prevention, resolution, security, reconstruction and reintegration. The UK must ensure that women's voice are heard and note taken of their concerns, analysis and recommendations.

6.4.2.2 **Insist on women's involvement in donor conferences:** proactively insist that at all donor conference relating to conflict affected regions there is direct consultation, participation and involvement of civil society and women's groups.

¹⁴ Evaluation of DFID development Assistance: gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. Phase II Thematic Evaluation@ conflict and Post conflict Reconstruction. Nicola Johnston. Working Paper 12. March 2005

- 6.4.2.3 **Support initiatives that build the capacity of women to run in national and provincial elections:** support, through finances and training, female candidates in national and provincial elections as well as training across national government administrations.
 - 6.4.2.4 **Develop a clear strategy on women's involvement in peacekeeping:** articulate a clear strategy which clarifies how and by whom wider support for women's meaningful participation in national and local politics and peacebuilding processes, including formal peace negotiations, will be provided.
 - 6.4.2.5 **Ensure the FCO Conflict Group further develops guidance on women's involvement in peacekeeping:** FCO's Conflict Group should further develop their guidance on how to engage women in peace processes with some examples from UK initiatives. This should be targeted at a small number of conflict affected countries for action.
- 6.4.3 Capacity and funding of women's groups:
- 6.4.3.1 **Dedicate specific funding to women's organisations working on women, peace and security:** Funding should be accessible to civil society organisations making a contribution to relevant women, peace and security objectives. This should include the possibility of smaller amounts than those usually offered by HM Government – small amounts of funding can make great differences, such as supporting women delegates to attend donor conferences. Further to this, resources should be made available to women's organisations to carry out capacity building to train and prepare women to participate in decision making at all levels. Women's groups should also be funded and utilised to collect data on the status of women and their needs; this would allow for further interventions to be tailored appropriately.
 - 6.4.3.2 **Support the creation of an enabling environment of security and rule of law** to allow civil society, particularly local NGOs and local journalists working on women's human rights issues, to work safely and effectively towards the promotion of human rights.

7. ABOUT GENDER ACTION FOR PEACE AND SECURITY

- 7.1 Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) is an expert working group of non-governmental organisations, academics and grassroots peacebuilders with vast experience in gender and conflict related issues.
- 7.2 The network currently has 14 member organisations and two individual experts.
- 7.3 For further information visit www.gaps-uk.org, or contact:
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