

In response to DFID's conflict consultation GAPS UK recommends the following:

- A. Conflict prevention should incorporate the promotion of gender equality at its core, to enable sustainable peace and development.
- B. The Conflict Policy Paper should be clearly linked to the National Action Plan To Implement SCR 1325, thereby ensuring the successful and effective implementation of UN SCR 1325.
- C. Local women's organisations should be empowered through financial and technical assistance to engage fully in conflict prevention, resolution and to address the needs of women in their communities.

A. Conflict prevention should incorporate the promotion of gender equality at its core, to enable sustainable peace and development.

The shift in policy discussion from national security to human security has proved a progressive step towards placing individuals at the centre of national, regional and international security agendas. Furthermore, the increasing acceptance of women's rights within policy making has led to the development of a series of international policies and legal instruments, such as CEDAW¹, the Beijing Declaration and Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. However, there is still much to be done in order that women's rights are upheld and that these treaties, resolutions and declarations are implemented. It is also critical that women's rights and security become central to conflict prevention policy.

GAPS welcomes DFID's recognition that only dealing with symptoms, impacts and consequences of conflict is unlikely to prevent future violent conflict. Gender equality would positively impact on the realization of effective conflict prevention and is in line with Millennium Development Goal 3: to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015. Equality between women and men is central to progress in human development. It is also a way to promote stability, prosperity and well-being for all.²

It is recognised that most intrastate conflicts occur in areas where gender inequality is extreme.³ GAPS strongly believes that conflict prevention strategies which fail to include the goal of gender equality risk undermining the prospects of a sustainable peace and, furthermore, they weaken the protection of women in the event of further conflict. As DFID notes "security is not just about states and militaries but is also about providing a safe environment for individuals and communities... [and that] concern lies with the physical security of the poor".⁴ In the context of conflict situations, women constitute the poorest of the poor and the majority of the civilian population. Neglecting to support symptoms of gender inequality such as Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) has long-term consequences on peacebuilding and development. SGBV continues to be perpetrated in epidemic proportions at the cost of the community, sustainable peace and development and has economic, political and social consequences, as well as being the prevalent security threat for women and girls.

¹ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

² <http://www.undp.org/mdg/goal3.shtml>

³ Caprioli, M. "Primed for Violence: The Role of Gender Inequality in Predicting Internal Conflict." *International Studies Quarterly* 49 (2), p.161-178.

⁴ Consultation Paper for DFID's Conflict Policy Paper, Ch.2, Point 19

GAPS advocates, therefore, that DFID strongly support the implementation of international policies and standards to further the promotion of gender equality and to address the priorities of women, children and young people in conflict-affected contexts as well as target initiatives to support these issues. Furthermore, GAPS strongly advocates for women's effective participation in long term development work to ensure institutional changes occur where women are heavily discriminated against. GAPS urges that HMG ensures that women's participation in decision making processes of government, judiciary, police and military occur on equal terms with men according to international standards. DFID should also commit itself to long-term capacity building of women's civil society organizations and networks to ensure women's voices are heard in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding processes.

B. GAPS recommends that the Conflict Policy Paper be clearly linked to the UK National Action Plan To Implement SCR 1325, thereby ensuring the successful and effective implementation of UN SCR 1325.

United Nations Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325 is a vital tool that recognises that "an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls and effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security." [1] It is clear that gender, peace and security issues are greater and more complex than UN SCR 1325. However, GAPS strongly believes that the UK National Action Plan on SCR 1325 that was released in March 2006 is a positive step towards effective implementation of the resolution. In terms of accountability, monitoring and evaluation it is important that the UK NAP becomes a useful tool for ensuring that DFID's work in conflict-affected areas is engendered, as well as linked up and strengthened in a cross government approach.

GAPS urges that the coordination between HMG departments with respect to the UK NAP be continued and that it be cited as a good example of inter-departmental coordination in the area of UK conflict intervention. The cross-Whitehall Group on SCR 1325, established during the development of the UK NAP, demonstrates how different HMG departments can effectively work together and underscores the importance of coordination in conflict and security policy. The work of the group advanced HMG's contribution to the coherent implementation of SCR 1325 and this should be continued. It must also be informed by and influence the work that is done at country level, where DFID must ensure that its offices and programmes not only mainstream gender, but specifically target gender initiatives and link them to peacebuilding where appropriate.

C. Grassroots women's organisations to be empowered to react to their own needs with regards to their conflict context.

GAPS welcomes DFID's commitment to support grassroots civil society and local organisations; however, in order to work better with civil society, GAPS advocates that (i) DFID explicitly supports grassroots women's organisations. GAPS particularly recommends that DFID allocate a specific percentage of peacebuilding and conflict resolution funding that is dedicated to gender sensitive peacebuilding projects and that is accessible to local women's organisations through DFID country offices. (ii) Furthermore, GAPS encourages DFID to empower grassroots women's NGOs and CSOs to monitor and evaluate the impact of conflict intervention strategies. This will establish to what extent gender sensitive conflict policies are being carried out on the ground and ascertain how successful they are. (iii) Lastly, GAPS urges DFID to draw on the gender and peacebuilding expertise in the UK, which can offer valuable expert advice and access to wide networks of grassroots and UK organisations which work in the area of gender and peacebuilding. With the inclusion of these three points in the Conflict Policy Paper GAPS believes that DFID's Policy Goal 2 will be more achievable.