

WHAT CAN PARLIAMENTARIANS DO?

The UK Government has a good record on some aspects of women, peace and security. The UK was one of the first countries to develop a National Action Plan on resolution 1325, and has consistently led calls at the UN to further the agenda. However, a coherent women, peace and security policy at the national level and in the UK's international interventions is lacking. Parliamentarians can play a key role in monitoring the Government's progress and action on this issue by ensuring that its policy is improved, that it is more comprehensively linked to the wider UK peace and security policy framework, and that it is implemented in international conflict settings.

Parliamentarians should ask the Government to:

- Appoint a high-level official responsible for women, peace and security issues to push the agenda forward and to ensure implementation.
- Widen the UK National Action Plan to address women, peace and security issues in Northern Ireland.
- Develop a transparent system that ensures qualified women are put forward for senior international posts.
- Guarantee that there is a dedicated, transparent budget attached to National Action Plan.
- Incorporate clear lines of responsibility, benchmarks, indicators, and timelines to action points in the UK National Action Plan and other policies on women, peace and security.

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The **Associate Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security** is the UK parliamentary forum for the discussion and critical analysis of issues relating to women, peace and security. It particularly focuses on how to promote the implementation, throughout government, of UN Security Council resolutions 1325; 1820, 1888 and 1889.

Gender Action for Peace and Security UK

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Gender Action for Peace and Security UK (GAPS) is a research and advocacy group that works to bridge the gap between the realities of women at the local level in conflict and post-conflict regions and UK decision makers and practitioners working on peace and security.

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY CASE STUDY: AFGHANISTAN



Afghanistan's complicated history of conflict and instability has far-reaching consequences for women and for gender relations. The Taliban imposed a "gender apartheid", banning women from employment in most sectors, limiting access to education, and restricting their fundamental freedoms and human rights. Despite international intervention, which was partly justified in terms of liberating Afghan women, "Afghanistan is still one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a woman", according to UK NGO WOMANKIND Worldwide.

Since 2001, there has been some progress towards inclusivity and gender equality in form of:

- Gender perspective has begun to be integrated across national policies like the Afghan National Development Strategy.
- Legal provisions in criminal law and national penal code have criminalised violence against women.
- Thirteen newly established Family Response Police Units have improved national responses to violence against women.

However, insecurity in Afghanistan and political complexities continue to present serious challenges to the inclusion of women in peacebuilding, governance, education, and economic development, which in turn perpetuate cycles of conflict and make the building of sustainable peace challenging. According to the GAPS UK Global Monitoring Checklist on Women, Peace and Security (2009):

- Violence against women remains pervasive with over 87 percent of women affected by domestic violence, which is compounded by discriminatory laws such as the 2009 Shia Law.
- At least 60 percent of marriages are forced and 57 percent of girls are married before their sixteenth birthday. Legislation designed to regulate this is not enforced.
- The country has one of the highest numbers of widows in the world who are marginalised and have little access to assistance. There are estimated to be around 70,000 conflict widows in Kabul alone.

A PARLIAMENTARIAN'S GUIDE TO WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

More than half of armed conflicts reignite within a decade of peace. At the heart of this problem lie deeply flawed peacebuilding efforts which often exclude 50 percent of the affected population: women.

Over the last fifty years the nature of conflict has changed – almost all modern conflicts are intrastate, although external dynamics still influence conflict realities. This means that it is more dangerous to be a civilian in today's conflicts.

As wars shift from the battlefields to communities, civilians now suffer more than ever. In World War I, approximately 10 percent of all deaths were non-combatants; in Iraq, since 2003, civilians account for around 90 percent of all fatalities. These changes have impacted enormously on women. This is a challenge that modern peacebuilding and security agendas must address.

“It is ... more dangerous to be a woman than to be a soldier in modern conflict”

Maj. Gen. Patrick Cammaert, former UN Peacekeeping Operation commander in DR Congo



WHAT IS THE 'WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY' PERSPECTIVE?

Women are an immense untapped resource for building a peaceful and sustainable future. However, rarely do their voices reach the negotiating tables or political spaces. Violence against women is still seen as an unfortunate by-product of conflict and largely left unchallenged. Understanding the realities, needs and capacities of women, as well as those of men, must lie at the heart of peacebuilding efforts if an inclusive and sustainable peace is to be achieved. Ignoring such issues is costly both for conflict affected regions and for the international community.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo brutal forms of sexual and gender-based violence are routinely perpetrated with impunity. It's estimated several hundred thousand women have been raped since the beginning of the wars.

87 percent of Afghan women experience domestic violence and live in constant insecurity extending the cycle of conflict, violence and marginalisation.

The women, peace and security perspective puts this understanding at the centre of conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding. It urges us to understand who engages in violence and why, who is affected by instability and how, what coping mechanisms they employ and what assistance they may require.

Policy-makers and practitioners must ask questions such as:

In the past 25 years, only one in forty peace agreement signatories have been women.

In Sri Lanka women make up only 5.8 percent of national parliamentarians.

There are only five female judges in Nepal spread across local and national judiciary.

- Why are particular groups of boys and young men so easily recruited into armed groups in Uganda? Why do some women engage in violence in conflict settings such as Sri Lanka?
- Are the thousands of Afghan widows able to send their children to school to contribute to a sustainable future? If not, how does this perpetuate poverty cycles and increase socio-economic instability?
- Do dependents of Liberian ex-combatants have access to land to support their families?
- Did women from diverse sections of society have a voice at the negotiating tables in Nepal? What impact does this have on the success of the country's peace process?
- What resources are available to survivors of serious sexual violence from the DRC conflict? Are they able to access justice and other assistance? In what way does impunity for these crimes against women in DRC perpetuate the conflict cycle?

WHAT HAS THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY DONE?

The UK played a key role in pushing the UN Security Council to recognise the critical importance of women in conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)

Adopted unanimously by the UN Security Council in October 2000, resolution 1325 emphasises the pursuit of gender equality in all aspects of peacebuilding. It acknowledges women's roles in conflict as combatants, informers, heads of household and protagonists for violence are far more complex than that of just victim. It puts women's voices and security at the heart of peace and security matters and understands their exclusion and marginalisation as negative for international security.

The key provisions of the resolution are captured by the "3 Ps":

- **equal participation** of women in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and reconstruction
- **protection** of the human rights of women and girls during times of conflict
- **prevention** of gender-based violence (GBV)

Since resolution 1325 was adopted in 2000, the Security Council have adopted three more resolutions on women, peace and security:

UN Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008)

Adopted in June 2008, resolution 1820 recognises sexual violence as an international security matter, a tactic of war and adverse to the pursuit of peace and security. The resolution demands that the international community treats violence against women as a security matter and to take urgent steps to prevent and respond through means such as security sector and justice reform and the provision of care.

UN Security Council Resolution 1888 (2009)

Adopted in September 2009, resolution 1888 builds on the provisions of resolution 1820 and asks the UN Secretary-General to deploy a team of special experts to situations where sexual and gender-based violence is of particular concern to work with UN and domestic personnel to strengthen the rule of law. The resolution also requests the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative to coordinate a range of mechanisms to fight sexual violence.

UN Security Council Resolution 1889 (2009)

Adopted in October 2009, resolution 1889 urges renewed measures to improve women's participation in peace processes and reaffirms the key role women can play in rebuilding war torn communities. The resolution further calls for effective monitoring mechanisms on women's roles in conflict and post-conflict countries and requests the development of a system of women, peace and security indicators in order to evaluate the implementation of these resolutions.

UK NATIONAL POLICY

In 2004, at the initiative of the UK and a handful of other states, the UN requested Member States to implement resolution 1325 through National Action Plans. The UK launched its National Action Plan on International Women's Day 2006. Implementation of the National Action Plan is led by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Defence and Department for International Development. The Plan covers the following 5 core areas.

UK National Action Plan on women, peace and security (2006)

Core areas for the UK NAP

1. Support for mainstreaming of gender perspectives at the UN in peace and security policy
2. Training and policy within HM Government
3. Gender justice, including gender-based violence
4. Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration
5. Working with civil society

The UK National Action Plan does not explicitly cover UK interventions in conflict countries and Northern Ireland is conspicuous by its absence. This was highlighted in the 2008 concluding observations on the UK by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which noted "with regret the lack of information provided on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security in Northern Ireland".

CHALLENGES FACING UK POLICY AND INTERVENTION

Whilst there has been some progress, research has shown that implementation of women, peace and security resolutions has been extremely patchy. Key factors seriously hindering real progress by the UN, UK and other donors and most importantly prevent meaningful change for women on the ground are:

- **Lack of resources for women, peace and security work.** The UK National Action Plan does not have a budget. All of the UK Government's National Action Plan activities are expected to be funded through existing resources and staff time. Without commitment of specific resources, impact will be limited.
- **Lack of reliable data and information and mechanisms to measure progress.** Without reliable data it is almost impossible to develop effective interventions and without benchmarks, timelines and indicators, it is difficult to measure and evaluate progress.
- **Lack of clear lines of responsibility and leadership** within the UK Government makes advancement of the women, peace and security agenda problematic.
- **Lack of system wide, coherent policy** on women, peace and security. The UK National Action Plan remains disconnected from wider UK security policy and other gender equality frameworks.