



SUBMISSION TO THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE SESSION ON CONFLICT AND DEVELOPMENT

WOMANKIND Worldwide

WOMANKIND Worldwide (WK) is a UK-based international development charity that works in partnership with 60 organisations in over 20 developing countries. Through our work, we aim to enable women to voice their concerns and claim their rights and to work globally for policies and practices which promote equality between men and women.¹

WK's main focus is on promoting women's civil and political participation, reducing violence against women and informing and influencing policies and practice impacting on women's human rights at the local, national and international levels. Our work in these core areas has naturally led us to develop knowledge and expertise in the area of women, conflict and development, both in terms of the impact of armed conflict on women, but also their important role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. This paper outlines the key learning from three of our programmes in countries that can be described as either in conflict or post-conflict situations or as 'fragile states'.

WK also conducts policy and advocacy work in the UK, with a particular focus on promoting the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), in particular through its active role on the UK Working Group on Women, Peace & Security. Our advocacy work is directly informed by the learning of our partners and other organisations working in this field

This submission builds on two previous submissions to the International Development Committee Inquiries into Afghanistan in 2002 and 2005.

1. Women, Conflict and Development

1.1. Conflict and development concerns are interdependent. On the one hand, the insecurity associated with conflict undermines progress on the development of communities and whole countries. On the other hand, conflict can be further accelerated by economic and social instability. WK believes that gender inequality is a root cause of poverty and insecurity and that no efforts to reduce poverty and end insecurity will succeed unless they include measures to tackle violations of women's human rights.

1.2. Conflict impacts on women and men differently. While men make up the majority fighting in armed forces and militias, women form the majority of those displaced by war. Since women are usually the primary care-givers, they bear the additional responsibility of having to access food and other resources in situations of physical insecurity. While both women and men experience trauma and violence during

¹ For further information about WOMANKIND's work visit www.womankind.org.uk

war, women experience specific trauma resulting from different forms of violence, including sexual violence, rape and sexual abuse. This abuse has also been linked to the military personnel and peacekeepers sent to protect them. It is therefore crucial to examine the gendered impact of conflict since this often exacerbates existing forms of discrimination and violations of women's human rights.

1.3. The tendency to portray women as 'victims' of conflict is too simplistic and it should not be assumed that all women are non-partisan – some women do participate in wars. However, women also have a crucial role to play in conflict prevention, resolution and reparation efforts.

1.4. The transition from conflict to peace offers a unique opportunity to address the root causes of conflict and to transform institutions, structures and relationships that hinder gender equality and justice. Increased representation of women in peace negotiations is important – not only do women have the right to participate equally with men in the decision-making processes that shape the development of their community and their country, but their exclusion from these processes can severely compromise the long-term success and sustainability of any peace and reconstruction solutions. Their equal participation must be combined with efforts to address gender issues in peace agreements, for example, violations of women's human rights, sexual and reproductive rights and the need for new legislation to extend women's economic rights, such as access to land, property and other resources.

1.5. While there is a growing recognition of women's agency in peacebuilding, they continue to be largely ignored or sidelined in all aspects of post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding processes.

1.6. There are a number of international instruments which set out clear guidelines and principles for the promotion and integration of a gender perspective and respect for human rights in all peace and security, conflict prevention and management and peacebuilding initiatives. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 sets out clear guidelines to promote women's role in all aspects of conflict prevention and resolution. This resolution builds on key provisions set out in internationally agreed instruments, such as CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action.

1.7. Special attention also needs to be given to the following instruments that are equally as important as the UNCSR 1325 on promoting women and girls rights in peacebuilding and war: UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (Francis Deng Guidelines), the four Security Council Resolutions of equal importance is on Children and Armed Conflict (1612/2005; 1539/2004; 1460/2003 and 1379/2001). The work carried out by the different UN Special Representatives and Rapporteurs, particularly the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and the UN Special Representative to the Secretary General on Human Rights Defenders.²

1.8. WOMANKIND believes that the full and rapid implementation of these and other supporting tools is necessary to facilitate inclusion of gender and women's rights in all efforts to address peace and security at the national and international levels.

2. WOMANKIND's approach to peacebuilding

WK works in partnership with women's organisations in developing countries. The primary focus of our work in conflict-affected countries is to promote the active and meaningful participation of women in all aspects of peace-building. We are committed to using a rights-based approach in all aspects of our post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding work. The learning from our work at the community level offers models of best practice that can be disseminated to other development practitioners and replicated elsewhere.³

² The Representatives and Rapporteurs provide analysis and independent advice to the UN via the Secretary General's office, which helps shape policymaking at an official level. They can collate evidence on abuses against women and men over a period of time, either as an individual organisation, or on a national or regional basis, or by type of abuse. As with the UN Declaration on Human Rights, reports produced by Representatives can be presented as recommendations of the UN and used to highlight instances or patterns of abuse

³ For further details of our work in these countries, visit: www.womankind.org.uk/where-we-work.html

2.1 Forgotten Conflicts and Local Truth Commission (Peru)

2.1.1. Violent civil war engulfed Peru for much of the 80s'. Women were profoundly affected and suffered internal displacement, violence and sexual violence. The Lima-based Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up TWO years ago⁴ and acts as a forum for civil society, the military and politicians to deal with human rights abuses committed during the conflict. It is valuable for its recognition of the specific needs of diverse groups, for example, women and indigenous women, but suffers from lack of international commitment and support.

2.1.2. WK's Peruvian partner the Institute for the Defence of Women's Rights (DEMUS) have discovered that such a public approach is not effective everywhere. They believe that the isolated community of Manta⁵ are not yet prepared for public court cases. This remote region became the location of a fierce and prolonged conflict between the Shining Path Guerrillas and the Military during the 80s'. Local residents, the majority of whom are indigenous Quechua speaking peasants, were victims of sustained violence. Many fled, but some had no choice but to remain and were killed or endured multiple human rights abuses⁶. Today, the conflict has ended, but the memories remain.

2.1.3. The indigenous women of Manta face multiple discrimination on the basis of their gender, their ethnicity and their rural isolation, which was exacerbated during the conflict. It has also meant they have been sidelined by mainstream post-conflict and peacebuilding efforts.

2.1.4. With the support of WK, DEMUS initiated a peace and reconciliation programme in Manta in 2004⁷ to tackle these problems. They began by producing an appraisal of conflict related issues still affecting the population. Following initial meetings with residents they realised that: the community remains fragmented and distrustful of one another and outsiders; issues such as sexual violence perpetrated against women remain highly sensitive and taboo; women are often reluctant to share their experiences for fear of shame and social exclusion; and men have yet to deal with the feelings arising from their failure to protect the women.

2.1.5. With the support of WK, DEMUS has gained the trust of the community by adopting a sensitive and gradual approach to starting the process of exploring people's experiences of the conflict, and in particular, those of the women. In this way, DEMUS plans to help rebuild the community and to develop a model of best practice that can be applied elsewhere in Peru.

2.1.6. Through its work with the Manta community in Peru WK has learnt that the impacts of conflict endure for decades, even generations⁸ and will not be lessened or resolved until they are dealt with. This highlights the importance of post-conflict programmes in countries that have been post-conflict for some time. The sensitive nature of the human rights violations committed during the conflict in Manta has also taught us that the concept of justice needs to be defined by the community so they can begin the process of realising justice in a culturally appropriate manner.⁹

2.2. Women's contribution to reuniting a war torn country (Somalia)

⁴ Based on the recommendation of the report, which documented Human Rights violations during the conflict. A analysis to this report was written by Amnesty International (See publication AMR 46/003/2004/s)

⁵ Manta is in the Department of Huancavelinca in the West of Peru.

⁶ Human Rights Abuses in Manta included torture, rape and the associated forced pregnancy and enslavement.

⁷ Dfid agreed to provide support to WK towards this project at the end of last year. Other funders are UNIFEM which has supported the programme for 8 months and PCS, an international agency supported by European and North American funders.

⁸ This is due to the fact that many of the children in Manta were fathered by the military either by consensual relations or sometimes by rape. These children are identifiable because they were obliged to assume their fathers' names. They face discrimination and social exclusion.

⁹ A challenge of this process is ensuring that culture does not become a justification for failing to address crucial issues such as violence against women.

2.2.1. Following state collapse in 1991, Somalia has been without a central government and has experienced serious inter-clan warfare. The sustained and violent interclan warfare between Somalia's five fiercely independent clans has resulted in widespread poverty and deprivation, impacting women the hardest in this strictly patriarchal society. Women have experienced multiple human rights violations in the form of rape, displacement and violence. A peace and reconciliation effort was launched in 1999 but failed to incorporate women into the process.

2.2.2. WK and its partners, Save Somali Women and Children (SSWC), have challenged women's exclusion by initiating the formation of a 'sixth' clan consisting of women, which has been officially recognised and incorporated into the peace process. This has provided women with the opportunity to negotiate their gender specific needs and interests and participate in politics and the formation of a democratic government planned for 2010. Women's involvement has been key in uniting disparate clans and gaining the trust of the population. A significant achievement was their negotiation of the removal of militia roadblocks and the provision of livelihood support for the demobilised militia. By forming the sixth clan women have played a vital part in bringing peace to Somalia and have opened up a new space for the participation of women.

2.3 Empowering women to find a voice in transitional times (Afghanistan)

2.3.1. WK's Afghanistan programme began in 2001 with the aim of integrating gender issues at the outset of national reconstruction efforts and advocating for the rights of Afghan women together with local women's organisations. To that end WK helped establish the Working Group for the Rights of Afghan Women.

2.3.2. Since 2003, we have been providing technical and financial assistance to three Afghan women's groups¹⁰. The work focuses on the promotion of women's civil and political participation through civic education programmes with women and young girls, equipping and enabling them with the knowledge, skills and resources they need to take an active part in their country's post-conflict reconstruction. Specifically, together with local partners, WK has enabled greater numbers of women to vote, stand for elections and be trained as election observers, as well as helping to shape policy.

2.3.3. Despite progress at this level, women continue to face 'conflict' in their daily lives through violence in the home and lack of security outside the home. Gender-based violence against women constitutes a serious impediment to the participation of Afghan women in public life, and to their participation in the economic sphere, as well as the obvious damage to their physical and mental health. Our experience of working with communities and women on the ground demonstrates that although post-conflict situations offer opportunities for new roles for men and women, in Afghanistan as elsewhere, the complexities of gender relations mean that there are no quick and easy solutions and what is required are long-term strategic interventions grounded in local realities and contexts.

Recommendations

WK welcomes the UK government's support of Security Council Resolution 1325 and specifically its development of a national action plan to implement the provisions of 1325. We also welcome the government's efforts to promote cross-departmental planning and strategising around conflict prevention and peacebuilding with initiatives such as the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit (PCRU).

However, we believe that the UK government could significantly improve its peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction policies by acting on the following recommendations:

General recommendations

¹⁰ WK's partners in Afghanistan are the Afghan Women's Educational Centre (AWEC), the Afghan Women's Resource Centre (AWRC) and the Afghan Women's Network (AWN).

The UK government should:

- **Increase resources and support for the accelerated implementation of existing commitments** to promote women's equal participation with men in all aspects of conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding processes, including the commitments set out in UN Security Council 1325, the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW, and those of lesser known and/or applied instruments, such as UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (Francis Deng Guidelines), the four Security Council Resolutions on Children and Armed Conflict (1612/2005; 1539/2004; 1460/2003 and 1379/2001) and the work of the UN Special Representatives and Rapporteurs, particularly the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women.
- **Place the promotion of human rights, and, in particular, women's human rights, at the centre of all its policies** to ensure that women's equal participation in all aspects of decision-making and their freedom to live lives free from violence are central to all conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives.

Conflict prevention & peacebuilding

The UK government should:

- **Support women's contributions to operational conflict prevention by** increasing resources and support for early warning systems (EWS) to monitor countries at risk of conflict, with a gender perspective, including gender-sensitive indicators of conflict, fully integrated into the EWS
- **Promote women's participation in peace processes** by providing greater support for women's effective participation in all stages of peace processes, promote gender-sensitive peace negotiations and agreements and encourage the mainstreaming of a gender perspective throughout the implementation of peace accords
- **Support informal and innovative grassroots initiatives led by women's organisations**, which can be a significant force for change by increasing the inclusiveness, transparency and sustainability of peace processes and reconstruction, as highlighted in this submission, through locally driven, locally-owned and inclusive processes
- **Pay greater attention to 'forgotten', less visible conflict and post-conflict communities in countries such as** Peru, Nicaragua and Zimbabwe, which are often neglected by official peace processes
- **Encourage the integration of a gender perspective in Disarmament, Demobilisation & Reintegration (DDR) processes** - women actively participate in conflict as armed combatants, yet their distinct needs are often ignored in official DDR processes. Their knowledge and insights, whether they are peacebuilders, former combatants or simply members of affected communities must be taken into consideration in DDR processes. Governments must also provide greater support for unofficial DDR programmes, such as WK's programmes in Peru and Somalia, since these are frequently sidelined, but play a vital role in providing support to the most excluded, including those not reached by mainstream DDR programmes
- **Support the integration of a gender perspective in Truth & Reconciliation Commissions** and ensure that women's human rights violations are documented and prosecuted in accordance with international laws and standards
- **Widen the scope of post-conflict work**, which usually focuses on rebuilding the infrastructure and the economy, to include the rebuilding of social capital and civil society and to promote long-term sustainable advances in gender equality and women's empowerment

- **There is a need to recognize the very significant contribution of Women's Human Rights Defenders in peacebuilding**, towards the advancement of human rights for all people. It is vital to ensure that these activists can expect to operate in an environment that is not only safe, but also actively supportive of their work.

The UK & Global Peacebuilding Efforts

- **Peacebuilding Commission** – we welcome the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and support the commitment to integrate a gender perspective into the work of the PBC and involve women equally in all aspects of conflict prevention, resolution and peace-building. This reinforces the goals agreed upon in SC Resolution 1325. WK urges the UK government and other stakeholders to ensure that these principles are acted upon in all aspects of the implementation of the PBC's work. WK further recommends that the PBC extends its mandate to conflict prevention, as well as post-conflict reconstruction
- **Responsibility to Protect** - the Responsibility to Protect framework is currently gender blind, which seriously limits its usefulness. The UK should take the lead in ensuring that existing experience and research on gender, peace & security are incorporated into all 3 segments of the R2P framework – i.e responsibility to prevent, responsibility to react and responsibility to rebuild - with particular attention paid to CEDAW and UN SC Resolution 1325.¹¹

¹¹ For a current and in-depth analysis of both why and how gender should be integrated into the various aspects of the R2P framework, see UNRISD publication *New Voices, New Perspectives*. "A Sight for Sore Eyes: Bringing Gender Vision to the Responsibility to Protect Framework" at <http://www.uninstraw.org/en/index.php?option=content&task=blogcategory&id=155&Itemid=215>