



WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION IN SOCIETY (WAVES)



From the ground up: women's rights organisations at the heart of tackling violence against women in conflict **Joint statement on the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, June 2014**

Joint statement from: Centro de Desarrollo Integral de la Mujer Aymara (Bolivia); Estudio para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer (Peru); FIDA-Kenya (Kenya); Humanitarian Assistance for the Women and Children of Afghanistan (Afghanistan); ISIS-Wicce (Uganda); LIWOMAC (Liberia); Musasa (Zimbabwe); SAATHI (Nepal); Women for Human Rights (Nepal); WAVES (Sierra Leone); and Womankind Worldwide.

The Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict presents a real opportunity to galvanise action to prevent violence against women and girls, in conflict and beyond. We welcome the commitment of the Foreign Secretary, the UNHCR Special Envoy and the British Government to tackling sexual violence in conflict. We appreciate the efforts made to include women activists from conflict-affected countries into the Summit and to ensure that their voices are heard. As the Foreign Secretary has said, "now is the time to act". We agree.

Yet for the Global Summit to lead to meaningful change in the lives of women and girls affected by conflict, it must be accompanied by a framework for action which addresses the root causes of sexual violence in conflict, and which recognises the central role of women's rights organisations in preventing violence against women and girls.

Tackling the root causes of violence against women and girls in conflict

Violence against women and girls is one of the most pervasive violations of human rights – recent statistics estimate that 35% of all women will experience violence in their lifetimeⁱ. The escalation of conflict typically coincides with an increase of gender-based and sexual violence, targeted mainly at women and girls. Violence against women and girls in conflict (and indeed in so-called 'peaceful' societies) can be prevented by addressing the multiple and intersecting factors that are conducive to the perpetration of violence against women and girls. This involves changing social norms that devalue women and reinforce men's greater power, transforming rigid social norms and male entitlement, challenging attitudes in the immediate environment to tackle peer approval of violence and abuse and empower women and girls. UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2106 affirms that women's political, social and economic empowerment and gender equality are central to long-term efforts to prevent sexual violence.

Women's rights organisations as catalysts for change

Large scale research has shown that strong women's rights movements and organisations are the single biggest factor in reducing violence against women and girlsⁱⁱ. Women's rights organisations, including those operating at local levels and outside of capital cities, have a comprehensive understanding of the local social and political structures that violate women's rights. They are also experienced in working with marginalised communities and non-traditional actors in peacebuilding. Over and over again, in all different contexts, women have realised the necessity of organising autonomously to advocate for their rightsⁱⁱⁱ. Yet their work goes largely unrecognised and is almost always underfunded. In recent statistics from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC), only 1.9% of screened funds dedicated to gender equality in the 2012 budget went to women's rights organisations and ministries^{iv}. Despite their enormous added value, many women's rights organisations are struggling to survive in the current aid environment.

Therefore we are calling for the Global Summit to:

Provide long term support and funding to women's rights organisations as key actors in tackling violence against women in conflict:

- Embed a commitment to actively supporting women's rights organisations in any framework and commitment to come from the Global Summit;

- Increase the accessibility of existing funding streams to women’s rights organisations, including through dedicated donor funds, and through support for women’s funds that have strong partnerships with grassroots organisations;
- Place greater emphasis on core funding for women’s rights organisations, supporting their own plans and budgets, and provide sizeable grants. Small amounts of money can stimulate innovation but does not enable vital expansion, scale-up and strengthening of organisational and operational capacity.

Address the root causes of violence against women and girls in conflict:

- Ensure that the Summit outcomes explicitly address the root causes of violence against women and girls; including by tackling harmful social norms and empowering women and girls.
- Ensure that outcomes take a holistic and multi-sectoral approach to preventing violence against women and girls; including across the individual, relationship, community and society levels and across economic life, education, justice, security and health sectors.
- Ensure that Summit commitments are grounded in core international human rights treaties and frameworks, including the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the seven UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security.
- Ensure that the Summit and any follow up actions firmly situate sexual violence in conflict in a gender and women, peace and security framework, and recognise a holistic approach to tackling sexual violence in conflict.

ⁱ London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine Violence against women a global health problem of epidemic proportions, Available online at: http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/newsevents/news/2013/gender_violence_report.html#sthash.I3QG1kMr.dpuf

ⁱⁱ Htun, M. and Weldon, L. 2012. ‘The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspective, 1975–2005’, American Political Science Review, Cambridge University Press and the American Political Science Association

ⁱⁱⁱ Esplen, E. 2013. Leaders for Change: Why Support Women’s Rights Organisations?

^{iv} Data drawn from OECD-DAC Members’ reporting on the Gender Equality Policy Marker, 2011 – 2012 <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=GENDER>