

**Submission to the House of Commons  
Foreign Affairs Committee**

**HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY: 2013 FCO REPORT**

**Written evidence by Womankind Worldwide  
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## Summary of Womankind Worldwide's Recommendations:

### **Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative**

Womankind Worldwide recommends that:

- *The FAC asks the FCO how the PSVI and the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict will galvanise political will and resources to ensure survivors of violence have access to comprehensive services, alongside efforts to increase prosecutions.*
- *The UK government ensures the PSVI and the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict addresses the root causes of violence against women and girls, including efforts to empower women and girls and tackle harmful social norms.*
- *The UK government ensures funding for civil society organisations under the PSVI is accessible to women's rights organisations, including by acting on recommendations by the OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality.*
- *The FAC asks the FCO what percentage of the £5 million funding for civil society<sup>1</sup> has gone directly to grassroots women's rights organisations and if specific steps have been taken to ensure funding is accessible to grassroots women's rights organisations.*
- *The UK government to ensure women's rights organisations are consulted and meaningfully participate in all international peace and security summits*
- *The FAC asks the FCO whether the outcomes of the Global Summit will include an accountability framework and how this will engage with civil society.*

### **Women, Peace and Security**

Womankind Worldwide recommends that:

- *The FAC asks the FCO how the new NAP will support greater cross-government capacity, coordination and policy coherence.*
- *The UK government works with in-country women's rights organisations to develop, implement and monitor progress on NAP objectives.*
- *The UK government to address the security needs of women human rights defenders by building security and protection into NAP programmes and funding mechanisms, based on the EU Human Rights Defender Guidelines.*
- *The UK government should establish a fully costed and earmarked budget for the implementation of the NAP, as proposed within UNSCR 2122.*
- *The FAC asks the FCO how the new Conflict Stability and Security Fund will be responsive to gender equality and how gender experts will be included in decision-making processes.*
- *The FAC asks the FCO how the new NAP will ensure that women's participation in conflict-resolution and peacebuilding is active and meaningful.*
- *The FAC asks the FCO how women's participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding at the local level will be supported in the new NAP.*

## **Womankind Worldwide**

1. Womankind Worldwide (Womankind) is the UK's leading international women's rights and international development organisation working with 35 women's rights organisations across 14 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Many of our partners are based in fragile and conflict-affected countries, and work to eliminate violence against women and to increase women's participation in decision-making at all levels.

## **Introduction**

2. Womankind welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the work of the Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) in its assessment of the UK's human rights efforts in 2013. This submission addressed the questions asked by the FAC on the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative and the FCO's work on women's rights, particularly Women, Peace and Security.

3. We have based much of our submission on two recent consultations with our partners – Afghan Women's Resource Centre (Afghanistan); FIDA-Kenya (Kenya); Liberian Women Media Action Committee (Liberia); Feminist Dalit Organisation (Nepal); SAATHI (Nepal); Women's Peace and Justice Project (Sierra Leone); WAVES (Sierra Leone); Women's Legal Aid Centre (Tanzania); Isis-WICCE (Uganda) and NAWOU (Uganda). These consultations were on the UK government's work on Women, Peace and Security and the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative.

## **1. Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative**

4. Womankind welcomes the Preventing Sexual Violence in conflict Initiative (PSVI) and the strong leadership that the UK has provided in securing the G8 Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, the UN Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. Whilst the FCO's aim to increase prosecutions for sexual violence in conflict is commendable; Womankind urges the FCO to ensure that alongside efforts to increase prosecutions, there are equal efforts towards ensuring adequate protection for survivors of sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence, and on primary prevention efforts.

5. Womankind also urges the FCO to ensure that focus on sexual violence does not obscure the wide ranging violations of women's rights that occur in conflict settings; including forced displacement; increases in early and forced marriages; an increase in domestic violence and sexual violence committed by civilians; the interruption of education; lack of participation in peace processes; and sexual exploitation and trafficking. It is critical that resources and attention remains on a holistic approach to Women, Peace and Security, including through the adequate resourcing of the UK's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (please see section 2).

6. Finally, Womankind welcomes the FCO's commitment to support grassroots organisations working to tackle violence against women in conflict. We hope the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict will build on this commitment including through additional funding and other support.

### **1.1. Provision of comprehensive services**

7. Women survivors of violence face great difficulties in sustaining participation in investigations and judicial processes without access to a range of comprehensive services, including health, livelihoods, legal and psycho-social support, and protection from further violence and reprisals. Many cases are dropped as they progress through the legal system, with only a fraction of cases ending in conviction because these basic conditions are not met<sup>ii</sup>.

8. It is vital the international community recognises that access to comprehensive services is a right and responds to the priorities of survivors. Womankind's partner in Uganda, Isis-Wicce, has

undertaken extensive research on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls and to understand the priorities and needs of survivors. It has found that whilst access to legal justice is important, that survivors have a range of other needs that must be met before pursuing prosecutions including:

- Access to basic services such as education, shelter, health care and economic opportunities;
- Trauma management and counselling;
- Influencing the direction of post-conflict recovery in their communities.

9. Womankind's partner in Kenya, FIDA-Kenya, has found the phrase 'I want to start a new life' is common among the women survivors they support. They identify key priorities of survivors of violence as:

- Free or affordable medical treatment;
- Relocation from where they reside owing to safety issues, including the perpetrator continuing to issue threats and survivors wishing to relocate because of stigma;
- Easy and user friendly reporting mechanism at the police stations;
- Counselling.

10. *Womankind recommends the FAC asks the FCO how the PSVI and the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict will galvanise political will and resources to ensure survivors of violence have access to comprehensive services, alongside efforts to increase prosecutions.*

## **1.2. Addressing the root causes of violence**

11. Research has found strong evidence exists that norms related to male authority, acceptance of wife beating and female obedience affect the overall level of intimate partner abuse in different settings.<sup>iii</sup> When internalized by men and enforced through friendship networks and other social institutions, these norms increase the likelihood that individual men will engage in violence.<sup>iv</sup> A study across South Asia, South-East Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, including two post-conflict sites, found the most common motivation that men reported for rape perpetration (70-80%) was related to sexual entitlement—men's belief that they have the right to sex, regardless of consent.<sup>v</sup> The research found that both partner violence and non-partner rape were fundamentally related to unequal gender norms, power inequalities and dominant ideals of manhood that support violence and control over women.<sup>vi</sup>

12. Evidence suggests that when looking at sexual violence in conflict it is not necessary to separate acts of violence from soldiers from their broader social settings to understand the drivers of abuse<sup>vii</sup>. Given the PSVI's aim is to end sexual violence in conflict, the focus should not only be on increasing investigations and prosecutions, but also on empowering women and girls and addressing harmful social norms that condone violence against women and girls.

13. Focusing on increasing investigations and prosecutions will also have limited impact if women and girls are unable to access institutions due to social barriers. For example, the World Bank's *World Development Report 2012* shows that the main reasons given by women survivors of violence for not seeking help were a perception of violence as being normal and justified, and feeling embarrassed, guilty and ashamed<sup>viii</sup>. Research by the European Think Tank Fride revealed similar barriers to women accessing formal justice institutions in terms of lack of education, limited awareness of rights, social stigma, and lack of economic autonomy<sup>ix</sup>. As a result, most women do not seek justice and protection. Effective violence prevention and response efforts therefore require a systematic focus on transforming social norms and empowering women and girls, as well as reforming institutions.

14. *Womankind urges the FCO to ensure the PSVI and the Global Summit address the root causes of violence against women and girls, including efforts to empower women and girls and tackle harmful social norms.*

### **1.3. Supporting women's rights organisations**

15. Recent research has reaffirmed the catalytic role that women's rights organisations play in ending violence against women and girls. The four-decade research effort in 70 countries found that the mobilisation of women's organisations and movements is more important for combating violence against women than the wealth of nations, left-wing political parties, or the number of women politicians<sup>x</sup>. These organisations not only provide services for survivors of violence, but also tirelessly campaign and advocate for changes in laws and policies to support survivors and tackle the root causes of violence. However, women's rights organisations remain critically underfunded and often struggle to access funding<sup>xi</sup>.

16. Womankind welcomes the commitment from the Foreign Secretary to provide £5 million over three years to support grassroots and human rights projects on tackling sexual violence in conflict. The FCO's Report states this funding is aimed at supporting the work of civil society organisations, including women's rights organisations. However, of the two organisations highlighted in the FCO's report, only one is a grassroots organisation.

17. *Womankind urges the FCO to ensure funding for civil society organisations is accessible to women's rights organisations, including by acting on recommendations by the OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality<sup>xii</sup>.*

18. *Womankind recommends the FAC asks the FCO what percentage of the £5 million funding for civil society has gone directly to grassroots women's rights organisations and if specific steps have been taken to ensure funding is accessible to grassroots women's rights organisations.*

19. Women's rights organisations can also be supported through the recognition of their work and role in tackling violence against women and girls – this can be achieved, inter alia, by Ministers meeting women's rights organisations on country visits and ensuring women's rights organisations can meaningfully participate at international fora including the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. Womankind welcomes the FCO's efforts on the latter, and urges this to be built on, ensuring that all future international summits and events hosted by UK invite women's rights organisations to take part in official proceedings.

20. *Womankind urges the FCO to ensure women's rights organisations are consulted and meaningfully participate in all international peace and security summits.*

21. *Womankind recommends the FAC asks whether Ministers, as a matter of course, meet with women's rights organisations on country-visits.*

### **1.4. Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict**

22. Womankind welcomes the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict and the effort to ensure the Summit leads to tangible and long-lasting changes in the lives of women, girls, men and boys in conflict-affected countries. To ensure this aspiration is achieved it is critical the Summit outcomes include a robust accountability framework. Womankind's partner in Uganda, NAWOU, told us that 'Funding commitments [as outcomes of the Global Summit] are vital ... but without the political will and accountability, that funding will be misused or underutilized'.

23. *Womankind recommends the FAC asks the FCO whether the outcomes of the Global Summit will include an accountability framework and how this will engage with civil society from conflict-affected countries.*

## **2. Women, Peace and Security**

24. In 2006 the UK became one of the first countries in the world to launch a National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (NAP). The government's implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 progressed significantly throughout the second NAP (2010-2013).

25. The new UK NAP is due to be launched in June 2014, and Womankind welcomes the commitment in the FCO's report that the new NAP will build on lessons learnt to date, and address some of the challenges in the 2010 NAP. Womankind has outlined below some of the challenges and lessons from the implementation of the 2010 NAP, which we hope will inform the development and implementation of the new NAP.

### **2.1. Cross-government capacity, coordination and policy coherence**

26. Cross-government coordination is key to ensuring the comprehensive implementation of UNSCR1325 and Womankind welcomes the efforts of the FCO, DFID, and MOD to work closely and collaboratively together on WPS. However, during the implementation of the 2010 NAP it became apparent that there are several issues which need addressing to ensure the government is in a stronger position to respond to its UNSCR1325 commitments:

27. First, there was a number of occasions that highlighted the need for broader understanding amongst DFID, MOD, and FCO staff on issues relating to UNSCR 1325 and its implementation and women, peace and security more widely. For instance, the 2013 London Conference on Somalia communiqué has a welcome commitment to address sexual violence but contains no provision for the participation of women in building peace<sup>xiii</sup>.

28. Second, the 2010 NAP's commitment to 'ensure policy coherence across HMG, particularly with the implementation of the Building Stability Overseas Strategy and the UK's National Action Plan on Violence Against Women' was promising. However, challenges remained in implementing the principles of the NAP into broader government policies and strategies. For instance, many DFID country operational plans did not (and still do not) reference the NAP or the need for the UK to meet its WPS commitments<sup>xiv</sup>. In addition, it is unclear if any member of the National Security Council has explicit responsibility for Women, Peace and Security to ensure gender perspectives are taken into account in all discussions.

29. *Womankind recommends the FAC asks the FCO how the new NAP will support greater cross-government capacity, coordination and policy coherence.*

### **2.2. Consulting and working in partnership with southern women's rights organisations**

30. Working with women's rights organisations, including those operating at local level and outside of capital cities, is essential to ensure that the NAP reflects the priorities of women in fragile and conflict-affected countries. A comprehensive understanding of local social and political structures that violate women's rights means that effective social norm change work is best led by these organisations.<sup>xv</sup> They are also experienced in working with marginalised communities and non-traditional actors in peacebuilding.<sup>xvi</sup>

31. Womankind welcomed the in-country workshops which informed the 2012 UK NAP review, but further efforts need to be made to facilitate a widespread, inclusive and ongoing consultative process with in-country women's rights organisations. A participatory monitoring and evaluation

process is critical, which involves civil society in a ‘locally-driven’ approach which strengthens both national and international accountability.<sup>xvii</sup>

32. *Womankind urges the FCO to work with in-country women’s rights organisations to develop, implement and monitor progress on NAP objectives, recognising and supporting their context-specific knowledge, experience in working with diverse local communities and expertise in social norm and behaviour change work.*

33. Women human rights defenders (WHRDs) face increasing threats and attacks whilst carrying out their work to defend the rights of women.<sup>xviii</sup> National governments hold ultimate responsibility for protecting their citizens. However, funders and donor governments should also consistently monitor and respond to security threats faced by in-country WHRD’s as they work on women, peace and security. The EU Human Rights Defenders Guidelines provide an important framework, and should inform measures taken to support WHRDs in the new NAP.<sup>xix</sup>

34. *Womankind urges the FCO to address the security needs of women human rights defenders by building security and protection into NAP programmes and funding mechanisms, based on the EU Human Rights Defender Guidelines.*

### **2.3. Women, Peace and Security funding**

35. Predictable and sustainable financing for women, peace and security is essential if the UK NAP is to achieve maximum impact. To achieve this, Womankind calls for a twin-track approach to funding women, peace and security.

- Firstly, a dedicated financing mechanism should be established, as recommended by UNSCR 2122 (adopted in October 2013). This includes ‘increasing contributions to local civil society’.<sup>xx</sup> There are numerous benefits to establishing a fully-costed and earmarked budget.<sup>xxi</sup> The UN Secretary-General recognises that earmarking funds can improve the effectiveness and outcomes of NAP development and implementation.<sup>xxii</sup>
- Secondly, women, peace and security should be mainstreamed and fully traceable throughout all conflict and development funding. Appointing gender experts to all funding boards is an important step to achieving this. The new Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF, operational 2015) offers an important opportunity to strengthen women, peace and security expenditure monitoring and accountability.

36. *Womankind urges the FCO to establish a fully costed and earmarked budget for the implementation of the NAP, as proposed within UNSCR 2122 and by the UN Secretary-General.*

37. *Womankind recommends the FAC asks the FCO how the new CSSF will be responsive to gender equality and how gender experts will be included in decision-making processes.*

### **2.4. Participation**

38. Womankind welcomes the commitment in the FCO’s Report that the new NAP will include a greater focus on women’s participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. For this participation to be meaningful, women must be able to be actively involved in and influence decision-making processes. Yet, entrenched structural barriers including traditional gender roles, attitudes and beliefs about women’s role in public life, constraints on women’s time and mobility, and violence against them hinder women’s ability to participate meaningfully in decision-making fora. Therefore FCO’s initial commitment must be translated into concrete proposals which ensure women’s right to full, equal and meaningful participation in peacebuilding is comprehensively addressed in the new UK NAP.

39. *Womankind recommends the FAC asks the FCO how the new NAP will ensure that women's participation in conflict-resolution and peacebuilding is active and meaningful.*

40. Womankind also welcomes the efforts made by the FCO to promote women's political and public participation in fragile and post-conflict countries in 2013, often through initiatives supported by the Human Rights and Democracy Fund. This progress must now be built upon in the new UK NAP. The UK NAP has to date largely focused on supporting women's participation in formal, national-level political processes. However, women's equal participation and influence at every level and in every institution is fundamental to representative, inclusive democracy and the fulfilment of women's rights. However, it is at the local level that many of the decisions that affect women's lives are made, and women's political and public participation at the local level is an important aim and end in itself.<sup>xxiii</sup> 'Bottom-up' approaches which build on women's roles in local peacebuilding are crucial. Therefore women's community-level decision-making should be supported in the new NAP, recognising that local leadership enables women to develop the skills required for nomination and election to district and provincial positions.

41. *Womankind recommends that the FAC asks the FCO how women's participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding at the local level will be supported in the new NAP.*

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<sup>i</sup> At the launch of the G8 Declaration in April, the Foreign Secretary announced new FCO funding of £5 million over three years to support grassroots and human rights projects on tackling sexual violence in conflict. This funding is part of the FCO Human Rights and Democracy Programme.

<sup>ii</sup> UN Women (2011) *Progress of the World's Women 2011-2012: In Pursuit of Justice* UN Women available online at: <http://progress.unwomen.org/pdfs/EN-Report-Progress.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> STRIVE (2011) *What Works to Prevent Partner Violence: An Evidence Overview* available online at: <http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/PDF/Outputs/Gender/60887-PartnerViolenceEvidenceOverview.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid

<sup>v</sup> UN (2013) *Why Do Some Men Use Violence Against Women and How Can We Prevent It? Quantitative Findings from the UN Multi-country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific* Available online at: <http://www.partners4prevention.org/node/515>

<sup>vi</sup> Ibid

<sup>vii</sup> Sexual Violence Research Initiative (2011) *Engaging Boys and Young Men in the Prevention of Sexual Violence: A systematic and global review of evaluated interventions* Available online at: <http://www.svri.org/menandboys.pdf>

<sup>viii</sup> World Bank (2011) 'Chapter 4: Promoting women's agency', in *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development*, Washington, DC: World Bank: 150-192

<sup>ix</sup> Castillejo, C. 2011. 'Building a State that Works for Women: Integrating Gender into Post-Conflict State Building', *Working Paper 107*, FRIDE

<sup>x</sup> 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

<sup>xi</sup> Emily Esplen, Womankind (2013) *Leaders for Change: Why support women's rights organisations* Available online at: [www.womankind.org.uk/2013/03/why-support-womens-rights-organisations/](http://www.womankind.org.uk/2013/03/why-support-womens-rights-organisations/)

<sup>xii</sup> DAC Network for Gender Equality (2008) *Issues Brief 3: Innovative Funding for Women's Organisations* Recommendations included: applications should not be expected to be written in perfect English; applications can be in an language; application forms are kept simple and short; evaluations are timed to suit women's rights organisations and are participatory and meaningful; and extensive evaluations are not imposed.

<sup>xiii</sup> UK government website, *Somalia Conference 2013: Communiqué*, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2012, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/somalia-conference-2013-communication> (accessed 8th September 2013)

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<sup>xiv</sup> For example, DFID, *DFID Uganda Operational Plan 2011 – 2015 (Updated June 2012)*, June 2012, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/67416/uganda-2011.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67416/uganda-2011.pdf) (accessed 1st September 2013)

<sup>xv</sup> Emily Esplen, *Womankind* (2013) *Leaders for Change: Why support women's rights organisations* Available online at: [www.womankind.org.uk/2013/03/why-support-womens-rights-organisations/](http://www.womankind.org.uk/2013/03/why-support-womens-rights-organisations/).

<sup>xvi</sup> Including disabled women, widows, women from ethnic or religious minority groups, ex-combatants, survivors of sexual violence, displaced women, and women living with HIV and AIDS.

<sup>xvii</sup> Institute for Inclusive Security, 2013. *National Action Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit*.

<sup>xviii</sup> Association for Women's Rights in Development, *Women Human Rights Defenders*

<sup>xix</sup> European Union. 'Ensuring protection – European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders'

<sup>xx</sup> S/RES/2122 (2013)

<sup>xxi</sup> Earmarking refers to the dedication of public funds to a specific use.

<sup>xxii</sup> United Nations. 2013. *Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security (S/2013/525)*, New York, United Nations.

<sup>xxiii</sup> *Why women's leadership matters – Key learning from Womankind Worldwide*, February 2013.