

Appendix 35: International work to address violence against women and girls overseas (See General Recommendation 19)

The UK's role internationally is such that it can and does have a tangible impact on the rights of women and girls outside its territory. Through its foreign policy, including its diplomatic, defence and development work, the UK has been able to tackle violence against women and girls (VAWG) internationally and help ensure all women and girls live free from gender-based violence.

Progress made since 2008

There have been a number of new policy commitments made across the UK's international departments (FCO, MoD, DfID)¹ to prevent VAWG:

- the cross-government *Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls: Action Plan*,² which includes an international section that sets out concrete actions to tackle VAWG internationally
- an explicit commitment in DfID's *Business Plan 2011-15*³ to approve new programmes to prevent VAWG, and the inclusion of VAWG as one of four pillars for action in DfID's *Strategic Vision for Girls and Women (2011)*⁴
- the 2012 revision of the UK *National Action Plan* for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security,⁵ which includes three country-specific action plans and specifically looks at gender and sexual based violence
- two new large DfID funds on what works to tackle VAWG and on female genital mutilation (FGM)
- targeted work by both the FCO and by DfID on preventing sexual violence in conflict and on tackling VAWG in humanitarian contexts, respectively.

In addition, DfID commissioned work on the role of women's rights organisations as primary partners in addressing VAWG, and on promising practices at the community level⁶ – areas where DFID is currently weakest. This was further

¹ Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Ministry of Defence (MoD), Department for International Development (DfID)

² Home Office (2011) *Call to End Violence against Woman and Girls: Action Plan*. HM Government <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/crime/call-end-violence-women-girls/vawg-action-plan?view=Binary>

³ Department for International Development (2011) *Business Plan 2011-2015* https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67658/DFID-business-plan.pdf

⁴ Department for International Development (2012) *The Strategic Vision for Girls and Women: One Year On* https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67331/StrategicVision-OneYearOn.pdf

⁵ Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2012) *UK National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 Women, Peace and Security*, February 2012 Revision http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/NationalActionPlans/unitedkingdom_nationalactionplan_feb2012revised.pdf

⁶ Esplen, E. (2012) *A Practical Guide to Community Programming on Violence Against Women and Girls*. Womankind Worldwide/GADN: London

complemented by a newly commissioned theory of change on VAWG⁷ and a guidance package on monitoring and evaluating change on VAWG.⁸ DFID's commitment to build up the evidence base around preventing VAWG through funding research and innovation is also important given the existing lack of data to support and guide VAWG programming.

Areas for action

1. Translating commitments into practice

For these positive commitments to translate into real differences in women's lives, challenges to effective operationalisation and implementation of new policy commitments must be addressed. In particular, there are concerns about adequate prioritisation, resourcing and cross-government policy coherence.⁹ As international VAWG cuts across so many different areas of work, strategies and departments, it is vital that there is oversight of all of these processes and steps to ensure that the range of strategies and policies across government are coherent and mutually reinforcing for maximum impact.

The Government should:

- Strengthen policy coherence across the international departments by ensuring the Champion for International Violence against Women and Girls has the resources and authority needed to push for coordination and coherence across the international departments
- Improve understanding of VAWG as a mainstream security concern that should be a central plank and a core objective of all UK foreign policy. Building on the efforts of the Government's *Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative*, all forms of VAWG should be recognised as both a cause and consequence of conflict, and as a priority issue to tackle before, during and post-conflict. At the highest level, a member of the National Security Council should have explicit responsibility for women, peace and security to ensure gender perspectives are taken into account in all discussions
- Ensure that policy commitments and action plans, such as the *National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325*, have clearly allocated funding to enable effective operationalisation of commitments¹⁰
- Ensure that targeted strategies addressing women's rights and international VAWG are not siloed, but are integrated into all of the UK's

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67335/How-to-note-VAWG-2-community-prog.pdf

⁷ Moosa, Z. (2012) *Theory of Change on Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (diagram and narrative)*. ActionAid/GADN: London

http://www.actionaid.org.uk/doc_lib/toc_for_vawg_summary.pdf

⁸ Engelhardt, A. Robinson, K. and Kangas, A. (2012) *Guidance on Monitoring and Evaluation for Programming on Violence against Women and Girls*. Social Development Direct/GADN: London https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67334/How-to-note-VAWG-3-monitoring-eval.pdf

⁹ Womankind Worldwide (2011) *Briefing for the Westminster Hall Debate on Violence Against Women and Girls*, 12th October 2011 <http://www.gadnetwork.org.uk/the-violence-against-women/>

¹⁰ Gender Action for Peace and Security (2010) *Position Paper: Publication of the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security*. GAPS http://www.nowomennopeace.org/images/stories/GAPS_Position_Paper_Publication_of_the_UK_NAP_on_Women_Peace_and_Security.pdf

international and foreign policy agendas, including on health and education for example, as well as within other government strategies and reviews (such as the *Building Stability Overseas Strategy*,¹¹ JACS and the *Humanitarian Emergency Response Review*¹²)

- Ensure that current gaps in evidence do not limit the Government's ambition by restricting funding only to those forms of violence where evidence is more readily available. Developing and monitoring the success of programmes to confront forms of violence that have received less attention should be a priority, such as sexual violence and rape within marriage, psychological violence, economic violence, violence and sexual harassment in public places, gender-based political violence and femicide
- Increase support to women's rights organisations that have specialist expertise in VAWG, a strong understanding of the local context and the capacity to mobilise communities against VAWG.¹³ The UK should follow the lead of other donors that have explored new and innovative channels to reach women's organisations working on VAWG, such as channeling money through women's funds, or establishing special funds and dedicated budget lines¹⁴

2. Driving international action to eliminate VAWG

The UK continues to be a powerful development champion internationally, with the authority and influence to raise the profile of VAWG with governments overseas and in international spaces. The UK should continue to build support for the issue internationally, promoting an understanding of VAWG as a key human rights, development, foreign policy and security issue.

Recommendations:

- **Continue to take a leadership role in the UK and in international fora to ensure that VAWG stays on the international agenda moving forward, including in key economic and policy-making fora such as the G8/G20**
- **Use the opportunity of chairing the international working group on establishing a new set of Millennium Development Goals after 2015 to raise the issue of VAWG and push for its inclusion in any new development framework**
- **Be more vocal in condemning large scale VAWG overseas and continue to push for stronger action to protect women and girls and**

¹¹ For more information see Stabilisation Unit, New strategy to help build stability overseas, <http://www.stabilisationunit.gov.uk/newsroom/561-new-strategy-to-help-build-stability-overseas.html> Accessed: 30th April 2012

¹² For more information see Department for International Development, Helping developing countries deal with humanitarian emergencies <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/What-we-do/Key-Issues/Humanitarian-disasters-and-emergencies/How-we-respond/Humanitarian-Emergency-Response-Review/> Accessed: 30th April 2012

¹³ Esplen, E. (2012) *A Practical Guide to Community Programming on Violence Against Women and Girls*. Womankind Worldwide/GADN: London
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67335/How-to-note-VAWG-2-community-prog.pdf

¹⁴ Alpizar, L., Clark, C., Pittman, A., Rosenhek, S. and Vidal, V. (2010) *Trends in bilateral and multilateral funding, 2009-2010* FundHER Research Update, Brief 1
<http://www.awid.org/eng/Media/Files/Brief-1-Trends-in-Bilateral-and-Multilateral-Funding>

respond adequately to VAWG in humanitarian interventions, including providing comprehensive services

- **Recognise and support the work of women human rights defenders who are on the frontlines of producing change in their communities at great personal risk by championing their concerns, facilitating their participation in international meetings that make decisions about their countries and making their protection a priority in foreign policy agendas**
- **Continue to invest in efforts to build up the evidence base around preventing VAWG**