

A World without Violence

How a new UK Government can accelerate progress towards ending international violence against women and girls

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Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is one of the most systematic and pervasive abuses of human rights, directly affecting one in three women globally and indirectly affecting all women and girls. It persists in every country of the world, in both public and private spheres, and is perpetrated both in conflict situations and in 'peaceful' societies. Many women experience violence regularly throughout their lives and much of this violence is committed with impunity. VAWG is both an extreme manifestation of gender inequality and a means of perpetuating it. It acts as a mechanism of social control by reinforcing the subordinate status of women and girls and prevents them from the fundamental right to live life with dignity and free from fear. Women and girls living in poverty or conflict are at greater risk of experiencing VAWG due to an absence or weakness of effective security, education and health infrastructures.

The UK holds an important international role and its work overseas can, and does, have tangible impacts on the rights of women and girls across the globe. Through its foreign policy, including its diplomatic, defence and development work, a new UK government must continue the current progress towards ending VAWG internationally and help ensure that all women and girls live free from gender-based violence.

The evidence base of how we can end VAWG is growing and it is clear that the UK needs to promote a comprehensive approach to the elimination of VAWG:

- **Prevention:** Challenging the discriminatory and harmful social norms that both tolerate and perpetrate VAWG is crucial to break down gender inequality. This requires education, women's and girls' empowerment (including leadership), promotion of gender equality and safe spaces for women and girls, both at home and in public.
- **Protection:** An integrated and strategic approach to protecting women and girls from violence is multi-faceted. In order for women and girls to realise their rights to live free from violence, protective measures must be available across all forms of VAWG and accessible to all women and girls. Protection is not just about immediate safety but also a deeper sense of safety and human security. This should include the provision of specialist services, including shelters and safe spaces for education, and access to sexual and reproductive health services.

- **Response:** Governments must respond to cases of VAWG and to situations of increased vulnerability for women (e.g. humanitarian and emergency situations). Inter alia, this needs to involve women at all levels of response: from peacekeepers to peace negotiators, from judges to police officers. This also means tackling the root causes of impunity in ways that are effective and appropriate for VAWG survivors.
- **Women's rights organisations:** These organisations are not only the front-line responders for VAWG survivors but are also at the forefront of efforts to prevent abuse. They are crucial partners who the UK should support, work with and learn from.

Specifically, a new UK government should ensure progress continues towards ending international VAWG by committing to:

Strengthen the profile on international VAWG within the UK Government, including by:

- Maintaining the Inter-Ministerial Champion on VAWG and ensuring this post has the resources, cross-departmental buy-in and time to deliver the role.
- Ensuring a member of the National Security Council has international VAWG in their portfolio.

Allocate sufficient funding to tackle VAWG internationally, including by:

- Committing to maintaining, at least, current levels of DFID funding and the number of programmes aimed at tackling VAWG.
- Committing to regularly, and publically reporting on levels of DFID funding and number of programmes aimed at tackling VAWG, at least every two years.
- Committing to increasing funding to women's rights organisations – both long-term and core funding.
- Support efforts by the OECD to develop a new code to track aid in support of ending violence against women and girls.

Ensure accountability on international VAWG commitments made by the UK, including by:

- Instituting measures for direct accountability to the women and girls intended to benefit from the UK's efforts (aid and diplomatic work) to tackle VAWG.

- Committing to monitoring and publically reporting on pledges made at international summits, particularly the Call to Action on GBV in Emergencies, the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, and the Girl Summit.
- Ensuring that any future international commitments (such as VAWG-related targets under the post-2015 development framework) are supported by robust monitoring and accountability mechanisms with an adequate space for women's rights organisations and civil society engagement throughout processes leading up to, during and after platforms for such commitments.

Champion tackling VAWG at international fora in 2015 and beyond, including by:

- Committing to continue to advocate for a VAWG target under a stand-alone gender equality goal in the post-2015 development framework. This should be accompanied by ambitious means of implementation including indicators that capture perceptions, national capacity and the objective situation (CSW and UNGA).
- Playing a championing role in the 20 year review of the commitments made in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (CSW and UNGA).
- Ensuring that all forms of VAWG in conflict are recognised and addressed as part of the 15 year review of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.
- Championing domestic resource mobilisation and gender responsive budgeting within the Financing for Development process which can unlock domestic resources needed to prevent and respond to VAWG, such as specialised services for survivors.

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The Gender & Development Network (GADN) brings together expert NGOs, consultants, academics and individuals committed to working on gender, development and women's rights issues. Our vision is of a world where social justice and gender equality prevail and where all women and girls are able to realise their rights free from discrimination. Our goal is to ensure that international development policy and practice promotes gender equality and women's and girls' rights. Our role is to support our members by sharing information and expertise, to undertake and disseminate research, and to provide expert advice and comment on government policies and projects.

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Working groups

GADN brings together development practitioners, experts and academics working on thematic issues through working groups. The Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) working group works together to advocate for the UK Government to make ending VAWG internationally a priority with a nuanced and rights-based approach, and shares expertise and information on VAWG.

Disclaimer

GADN produces a series of background briefings for use by our members and others. These are produced by the Secretariat in consultation with our Advisory Group and relevant Working Groups. They do not necessarily represent the views of all our members.