



# Humanitarians and the Women, Peace and Security agenda during Covid-19

## Leading in crisis

In recent years, the UK government has championed gender equality through its work with the Generation Equality Forum's Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Action Coalition and its focus on girls' education at this year's G7 Summit. The Covid-19 pandemic and the recent UK aid cuts, however, threaten to roll back progress globally – and especially in humanitarian crisis settings. It is more important than ever to fully implement the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda's call to transform crisis response by coordinating across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding spheres. To be meaningful, gender-responsive humanitarian action must connect women and girl's rights in crisis settings to WPS's call for conflict prevention, women's participation and resilience. Breaking down the division between humanitarianism and peacebuilding will further efforts at a more peaceful and just world in the widest sense. Gender justice is intimately linked to peace and disarmament, economic prosperity and recovery, and human rights. The Covid-19 pandemic draws these interconnections into even sharper focus. At this pivotal moment for carving out an agenda beyond 2021, the UK government and UK-based actors can take leadership by making WPS a foundational part of gender-responsive humanitarian preparedness, response and recovery in the wake of Covid-19.

Based on a learning event co-hosted in November 2020 by the Gender and Development Network (GADN)'s Humanitarian working group, Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS UK) and the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG), this briefing sets out key themes emerging from the panel discussion among representatives from women-led humanitarian organisations in Myanmar, Kenya and Lebanon. We demonstrate first that the WPS agenda is key to putting gender at the heart of effective humanitarian response, and second that responses led by women, girls and gender-diverse people are critical for truly gender-responsive humanitarian action. We conclude with recommendations for concrete actions to bring WPS into the humanitarian space.

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# 1. Introduction

In 2021, UK-based advocates for gender justice in humanitarian action find ourselves at a turning point. Key anniversaries of the WPS agenda (see Box 1) and the Beijing Platform for Action are behind us, as well as the landmark Generation Equality Forum where substantive commitments were made to gender justice in crisis settings – most notably through the Women, Peace and Security–Humanitarian Action (WPS–HA) Compact.<sup>i</sup> The Grand Bargain<sup>ii</sup> – a key instrument for reducing funding gaps and improving efficient delivery of humanitarian aid – has also agreed new targets for local humanitarian action and quality funding to local organisations, including women’s rights organisations, which have strong capacity to build resilience and peace.

Despite these flagship policy commitments, the Covid-19 pandemic has hit women and girls hard, as carers in the household and frontline health workers, and with lower access to health care services.<sup>1</sup> Women, girls and gender-diverse people also face harsh economic impacts and knock-on effects from Covid-19 in areas such as mental and reproductive health care, all of which are exacerbated in humanitarian settings.<sup>2</sup> GBV has strikingly increased: across 15 African countries, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) found rises in intimate partner violence (increase reported by 73 per cent of women), sexual violence (51 per cent) and early and forced marriage (32 per cent).<sup>3</sup> On top of this, Covid-19 responses have deepened marginalisation and risk: especially in conflict and crisis settings, planning processes have been male-dominated and militarised, resulting in rising insecurity and in some cases contributing directly to GBV.<sup>4</sup> Pandemic restrictions have also limited international non-governmental organisations (NGOs)’ access, leading to a greater reliance on underfunded local organisations to deliver services – and greater burdens on individual women as caregivers and first responders – without a proportionate transfer of power and resources.<sup>5</sup> The UK government has also made devastating aid cuts of nearly £4 billion, with a disproportionate impact on programmes targeting women and girls – see, for example, the UK’s 85 per cent reduction in funding to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)’s supplies programme.<sup>6</sup>

Now, more than ever, there is a critical need for contextually appropriate and coordinated responses that transcend the so-called “triple nexus”,<sup>iii</sup> in partnership with women’s and girls’ rights organisations, GBV organisations and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA+) organisations.<sup>7</sup> The

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<sup>i</sup> The WPS-HA Compact is an inter-generational, inclusive global movement which calls for the redesign of peace and security and humanitarian processes to systematically and meaningfully include women and girls. As co-lead of the Forum’s GBV Action Coalition, the UK has also been notably inclusive of refugees and crisis-affected populations in its work. For more on the WPS–HA Compact, see: <https://wpshcompact.org/>

<sup>ii</sup> The Grand Bargain, launched during the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016, is a unique agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organisations committed to getting more resources into the hands of crisis-affected people and to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action. For more on this, see: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain>

<sup>iii</sup> The term “triple nexus” describes the overlaps, interlinkages and relationships between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors.

WPS agenda sets out a framework for this kind of cross-sectoral work across four pillars: prevention, protection, participation, and relief and recovery. Humanitarians have tended to dismiss the WPS agenda, seeing it as the purview of peacebuilding; however, this severely limits gender-responsive humanitarian action. All crises are profoundly gendered, as the current pandemic clearly illustrates, which means that just, effective and sustainable humanitarian action requires a gender lens that WPS can help to provide.<sup>iv</sup>

To energise this conversation with allies in the UK, GADN's Humanitarian working group convened a roundtable, co-hosted by GAPS UK and HPG in collaboration with the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)'s Gender and Inclusion in Crisis Network. Speakers represented the Gender Equality Network (Myanmar), the Gender Violence Recovery Centre (Kenya) and FE-MALE (Lebanon). The event, which this briefing summarises, had two main goals: first, to show how artificial divisions between WPS and humanitarian response serve to limit gender-responsive humanitarian action; and second, to learn from local organisations on feminist, intersectional and rights-based responses to crises of all kinds. This second goal is critical to achieving the first: by trusting, investing in and being led by local women's, girls' and gender-diverse people's organisations, we are already working to meaningfully dissolve the artificial line drawn between peacebuilding and humanitarian action.

The effects of the pandemic will be felt for years to come in barriers to women's participation, leadership and livelihoods around the world.<sup>8</sup> In the UK, the government has championed gender equality through the Generation Equality Forum's GBV Action Coalition and a focus on girls' education at this year's G7 Summit. The recent aid cuts will unavoidably constrain progress, meaning that a commitment to coordination is even more critical to bring together not just conflict, humanitarian and development but also diplomatic and foreign policy levers for change across the newly merged FCDO. The UK's National Action Plan (NAP) on WPS already connects these dots very clearly, arguing that "effective and gender-sensitive humanitarian interventions contribute to all pillars of WPS" while also serving to strengthen humanitarian responses with greater participation in decision-making by women and girls.<sup>9</sup> The UK government, despite the recent cuts to aid, has thus demonstrated its global leadership in linking WPS and humanitarian action to date, and it can do so again by advocating for a joined-up approach to WPS, humanitarianism and Covid-19 recovery.

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<sup>iv</sup> See, for example, the Feminist Response to Covid-19, a set of principles, produced by a collective of feminist organisations and activists, encompassing wellbeing, health, financing, democratic values, climate and multilateral global justice: <https://www.feministcovidresponse.com/>

## Box 1: Women, Peace and Security in brief

On 31 October 2000, the **UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1325**, its first formal and legal document to require parties to a conflict to prevent violations of women's rights and support their participation in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction. In subsequent years, that groundbreaking resolution was joined by nine more (**UNSCR 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2242, 2467 and 2493**) calling for change in areas including conflict-related sexual violence; sexual exploitation and abuse; data and indicators to track progress on WPS objectives; deployment of women's protection advisers; training for military personnel; and women's participation in peacebuilding. These 10 resolutions together form the **Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda**.

The flagship UNSCR 1325 sets out **four pillars**:

1. **Participation:** Increasing women's participation at every level of decision-making, from national to regional and international; in peace talks and negotiations; in conflict prevention, management and resolution; and in peace operations as civilians, soldiers and police.
2. **Prevention:**<sup>v</sup> Improved strategies to prevent violence against women, including prosecuting violations of international law, strengthening national laws against GBV, and supporting local women's peace and conflict-resolution work.
3. **Protection:** Protection for women and girls from sexual violence and GBV in humanitarian settings, including refugee settlements and camps.
4. **Relief and recovery:** Applying a gender lens to addressing international crises, such as by considering the needs of women and girls in the provision of aid and the design of refugee camps and settlements.

UNSCR 1325 also calls for states to establish national action plans (NAPs) on WPS to guide implementation, priorities and reporting, and to provide information on how relevant activities are governed, funded and monitored. According to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 98 UN member states (51 per cent) have adopted NAPs, 35 of which specify an allocated budget.<sup>10</sup>

### Learn more

- United States Institute of Peace. 2020. *What is UNSCR 1325? An Explanation of the Landmark Resolution on Women, Peace and Security*: [https://www.usip.org/gender\\_peacebuilding/about\\_UNSCR\\_1325](https://www.usip.org/gender_peacebuilding/about_UNSCR_1325)
- UN Women. 2015. *Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing peace: a global study on the implementation of UNSCR 1325*: <https://wps.unwomen.org/index.html>

<sup>v</sup> Given the roots of the WPS agenda and particularly UNSCR 1325 in women's anti-war activism, there has been considerable debate about *prevention* within the WPS agenda – namely, whether it means prevention of violence against women and girls during and after conflict, and especially conflict-related sexual violence, or prevention of conflict itself. Cora Weiss, a co-drafter of UNSCR 1325, wrote in 2011, "We cannot pluck rape out of war and let the war go on. We must not make war safe for women. It is time to abolish war." See Shepherd, L. 2016. 'Making war safe for women? NAPs and the militarisation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda', *International Political Science Review* 37.3, 324–335.

## 2. What's humanitarian about Women, Peace and Security?

The WPS agenda, which includes a specific pillar on relief and recovery, was always intended to speak to humanitarian actors. Research from the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security shows that the lowest-scoring countries on the WPS index are also those at highest risk of humanitarian crises.<sup>11</sup> As feminists have argued for some time, peace agreements and other peacebuilding processes are more sustainable when women are fully engaged; the same can be true of humanitarian response plans if women, girls and gender-diverse people are included early in the process and throughout, as well as people of all ages, abilities and socioeconomic backgrounds.<sup>12</sup> This means that international humanitarian actors, which are already implicated in the agenda's relief and recovery pillar, need to step up to become equal players to peacebuilding actors in endorsing and implementing the agenda. For them, WPS should be understood as serving a dual purpose. On one hand, it is a set of tools that can be used for pursuing humanitarian goals: a platform for demanding the fulfilment of obligations on gender justice that have been made by governments, donors, international institutions and humanitarian agencies themselves, among others. The WPS agenda's 10 resolutions to date, as well as the NAPs adopted by 51 per cent of countries, contain commitments of funds and political will that can be called upon to meet needs in crisis settings. On the other hand, WPS (and especially UNSCR 1325) is an agenda for profound and sweeping action on gender justice within the humanitarian sector itself, and thus it is imperative for reaching crisis-affected people of all genders effectively and appropriately.

WPS presents a challenge to humanitarian actors to live up to its ambition of participation, prevention, protection, relief and recovery for women and girls in conflict-affected settings; to meaningfully engage with local humanitarian actors, not as "beneficiaries" but as partners; and to see women, girls and their organisations for what they are – the original first responders who save lives in crises with their commitment, community-level knowledge and advocacy for change. The artificial line between humanitarian and peacebuilding was created by donors and international agencies (especially those based in Western donor states) and represents a lack of understanding of how women, girls and gender-diverse people and their communities actually experience crises. Civil society spaces, and especially organisations led by women, girls and gender-diverse people, are also where the most transformational WPS work is already happening, especially in recent years as they have led the way in interpreting the WPS resolutions expansively and intersectionally. As the Gender Equality Network's director, May Sabe Phyu, outlined from Myanmar at our policy roundtable in November 2020, "If there is no peace and security for women, the country or society as a whole would not be peaceful and stable. Humanitarianism is not only for fulfilling basic needs such as food and shelter or water and sanitation; it should also be supporting people to live with dignity."



## 3. Moving from commitments to action

Maintaining a division between peacebuilding and humanitarianism – and by extension between WPS and gender-responsive humanitarian action – serves to divide funding and political will, as well as hindering coordination, strategic partnerships and support for gender justice in crises. The parallels between these two agendas, and the imperative to work on them in tandem, is evidenced by the WPS–HA Compact that emerged from the Generation Equality Forum this year.<sup>13</sup> While sectoral divisions have arisen due to the conviction on the part of many humanitarians that crisis response should remain as apolitical as possible – unlike, ostensibly, the spheres of development and peacebuilding – we make the case here that these divisions undercut gender-responsiveness, and, critically, that cross-sectoral working can help strengthen principled humanitarian action.<sup>14</sup> A siloed approach, in contrast, reduces the effectiveness of responses: complex political environments and protracted crises simply do not conform to these divisions, making working across the triple nexus and beyond absolutely critical to appropriate responses. There is a clear need to integrate the WPS framework across the UK’s work on conflict, security and humanitarian action, which is echoed in the UK’s latest NAP and its contention that “effective and gender-sensitive humanitarian interventions contribute to all pillars of WPS”, and vice versa.<sup>15</sup>

With that in mind, our roundtable raised the following key priority areas for action to forge closer links between humanitarian response and development across the UK government and UK-based humanitarian and development actors, along with their partners and allies around the world. The WPS agenda as it stands provides more than enough tools to foment meaningful and lasting change in gender-responsive humanitarianism in the following areas.

### 3.1 Respond to gender in crises of all kinds

Gendered harms in and out of conflict are an ongoing global crisis in their own right, and one that must not be side-lined as tangential to the “real” crises of war or displacement, or as “merely” a private matter.<sup>16</sup> As noted above, it is well known that rates of GBV tend to increase during conflicts and disasters, a fact that is amplified and complicated by Covid-19 in existing humanitarian crises.<sup>17</sup> In Myanmar, for example, Gender Equality Network shared that domestic violence has spiked during the pandemic, especially while stay-at-home orders were in place, requiring creative strategies to reach isolated survivors with accessible information and support. Similarly, Alberta Wambua of the Gender Violence Recovery Centre in Kenya reported a stark increase in cases of domestic violence between March and October 2020. These findings have been echoed around the world in what UN Women has called the “shadow pandemic”.<sup>18</sup> Pervasive GBV is a grave injustice on its own, but it also acts as a barrier to leadership and participation, education and economic inclusion for women, girls and gender-diverse people. The WPS agenda is therefore vital for bringing a comprehensive focus on GBV prevention and response to all humanitarian action, highlighting the gendered causes of GBV and pushing for responses shaped by the lived experiences of survivors in each setting. The agenda’s second and third pillars –

prevention and protection – provide a roadmap for participatory and supportive responses to all forms of GBV, in and across conflict, displacement and peacebuilding processes, which otherwise may be neglected. This framework makes a more effective response possible to all forms of GBV, strengthening relevance and accountability to women, girls and gender-diverse people at every stage of response and recovery.

Especially during the pandemic, the exclusion of women, girls and gender-diverse people from economic resources and decision-making constitutes another gendered crisis. Recent findings show that 42 per cent of women (versus 32 per cent of men) are employed in those sectors most impacted by the pandemic globally, while women are also more likely to work informally and thus lack access to social safety nets and Covid-19 support programmes, therefore deepening gendered inequalities.<sup>19</sup> In crisis settings of all kinds, women's pre-existing unemployment and financial exclusion correlate with higher levels of violence, while it is also known that conflict exacerbates these inequalities, leaving women struggling to meet basic needs, unable to realise their own goals, and more vulnerable than ever to GBV.<sup>20</sup> Emerging research from IRC and ODI shows that crisis-related instability and Covid-19 are compounding the exclusion of young, displaced women from livelihoods and other economic activities, leaving them extremely vulnerable.<sup>21</sup> WPS's focus on participatory approaches can help guide the design of holistic responses that address these very real, material needs of women, girls and gender-diverse people affected by crises.

The UK government has recognised GBV as a critical concern in and out of crises through work such as the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative, as well as the What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women research programme, the findings of which the government should now embed in the UK's humanitarian work. The UK should extend this leadership to responding to all forms of gendered harms in crises, addressing the rights, needs and experiences of women, girls and gender-diverse people. As co-chair of the GBV Action Coalition at the Generation Equality Forum, the UK is well placed to advocate for greater attention to GBV in both Covid-19 and humanitarian responses.

### **3.2 Make meaningful participation a reality**

Perhaps WPS's most prominent pillar is the second – participation – which calls for participatory decision-making and leadership, as well as participatory gender and conflict analysis in concert with national governments, local authorities and civil society. To be meaningful, participation must also be intersectional and bring to the table not only women- and girl-led organisations but also LGBTQIA+ and gender-diverse groups, people with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities, racialised groups, older women and youth. The UK can do this through both FCDO's own humanitarian programmes and funding, and through its advocacy in international forums and institutions. This kind of consultation focuses not only on how conflict impacts on women, girls and gender-diverse people, but also on the broader gendered dynamics of violence, recovery, resilience and peace.

It is worth noting that the meaningful participation that WPS calls for goes beyond access to decision-making tables – rather, it advocates for transforming those tables and fomenting women’s leadership; a call that sits comfortably alongside humanitarian commitments on “localisation” and locally led humanitarian action.<sup>vi</sup> Women and girls, and women- and girl-led organisations, are, after all, the original and most effective first responders in crisis-affected communities around the world, understanding and reacting to the needs of their communities. But without recognition of their work as *humanitarian* by the humanitarian community, including donors and governments, they are not able to access the funding and support they need. FE-MALE, the Gender Violence Recovery Centre and the Gender Equality Network all attested to their work advocating for gender-responsive local and national responses and addressing acute needs during the pandemic, including distributing masks, hand sanitisers, essential medicines and menstrual products; translating and disseminating safety information via a variety of channels; and connecting survivors of violence to legal aid. “In any situation of crisis, women know better for their home and their community”, argued May Phyu. “They know how to survive not only for them but also for their children and their family as well. Women’s survival strategies come from their own life experience.”

The WPS agenda’s call for participation is therefore a call to do not only the right thing but also the most impactful thing, from the outset of humanitarian crises, thereby setting the stage from the start for more inclusive, sustainable and transformative recovery and peacebuilding processes and for similarly stronger crisis prevention, resilience and mitigation. This year, the Generation Equality Forum has provided an opportunity for the UK government to work with the co-leads of the WPS–HA Compact, UN Women and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to create formal feedback mechanisms to ensure this kind of participation in future humanitarian responses. Existing models and tools for better consultation, communication and participation can be found in, for example, IRC’s methodology for safety audits during Covid-19, HPG’s recent work on accountability to affected populations, and UN Women’s recent research in Bangladesh, Colombia, Jordan and Uganda.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.3 Operationalise the relief and recovery pillar

The fourth pillar of the WPS agenda – relief and recovery – has long been known informally as the “orphan” pillar, because it has been so little taken up by governments and other actors.<sup>23</sup> Yet this pillar is the most immediately relevant to humanitarian response and principles, given its focus on gender-responsive attention to emergency needs and provision of services. International humanitarian actors must be active players in elaborating and operationalising this subset of the WPS agenda, developing a clear set of commitments and using it to deploy a gender lens across all areas of humanitarian response. Important work has already begun in this regard, spearheaded by groups like the Feminist Humanitarian Network, as well as through the WPS-HA Compact and policy dialogues via the Grand Bargain and the Inter-Agency Standing

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<sup>vi</sup> Important synergies can be seen in the emerging Youth, Peace and Security agenda and the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action, both of which also emphasise participation as a key area for concern and action. Together with WPS, these mechanisms can facilitate the particular inclusion of girls and gender-diverse adolescents in peacebuilding and humanitarian response. For more on this, see: [www.youthcompact.org](http://www.youthcompact.org)



Committee (IASC). The UK government has acknowledged this critical overlap with strategic outcome 4 on humanitarian response in the current NAP, but much remains to be done in linking this work to wider WPS processes.

Operationalising the fourth pillar is yet another area where participation will be key, and here the UK's NAP is already firmly committed:

*Advocating for women's right to participate in decision-making is fundamental to the implementation of the UK's WPS commitments. While it contributes indirectly to all four pillars of the WPS agenda, this strategic outcome's main goal is to further the implementation of the participation pillar, as well as to relief and recovery.<sup>24</sup>*

Humanitarian response will be strengthened by taking on board WPS's provisions on participatory and gender-responsive relief work and linking them to humanitarian processes, as well pushing for the major international players in humanitarian response such as the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UNHCR and IASC to incorporate them too. With appropriate leadership, including from major donor governments like the UK, there is potential here to institutionalise more gender-responsive approaches not just to the protection sector but also food security and nutrition; health; shelter; water, sanitation and hygiene; education; and camp coordination and logistics.

### **3.4 Invest in women-led local humanitarian action**

Bringing about gender justice – particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings – requires dedicated, long-term and flexible funding to support organisations led by women, girls and gender-diverse people for their self-defined priorities. This has rarely been available, however, leaving local women's organisations chronically underfunded and surviving on a project-to-project basis in humanitarian settings. Likewise, girl-led organisations face specific barriers to accessing funding as they are often informal, lack organisational capacity for fundraising and reporting, and are not taken seriously as humanitarian responders. This has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic diverting even greater amounts of funding away from a wider range of development, humanitarian and peacebuilding issues.

In line with its Grand Bargain commitments, the UK should show leadership by ensuring that a much greater proportion of its humanitarian funding directly reaches local actors rather than international humanitarian agencies. Hayat Mirshad of FE-MALE, based in Lebanon, noted that ring-fencing half of existing funding commitments for organisations led by women, girls and gender-diverse people would give them the freedom to pursue self-defined priorities in emergencies, rather than forcing them to conform to donors' concerns. Such a move would be a meaningful step towards reshaping power relations and shifting resources towards locally grounded and transformative opportunities.

## 3.5 Integrate gender and Women, Peace and Security across Covid-19 response

In a 2016 study on vulnerability to pandemics, 7 of the 10 most at-risk settings were found to be conflict-affected countries where health infrastructure and governance mechanisms were already weakened, putting millions of people – and especially women, girls and gender-diverse people – at profound risk of severe illness, economic insecurity and violence in their homes and communities as well as at the hands of armed groups.<sup>25</sup> The deleterious effects of women's and girls' absence from pandemic decision-making and post-Covid-19 planning are already becoming apparent: from exclusion of menstrual products from baskets of necessary goods to failures to account for childcare and gendered precarity in economic recovery plans.

By the time the pandemic has run its course, it will have brought about wholesale immediate and knock-on effects in every area of life, and all the more so in conflict-affected spaces. It is absolutely critical for women, girls and gender-diverse people to be actively involved in every stage of decision-making around responding to and recovering from this global crisis. WPS was conceived in large part as a set of tools for remedying women's exclusion from decision-making in conflict, peacebuilding and humanitarian response. Integrating WPS across humanitarian and conflict response in light of Covid-19 is therefore an important acknowledgement of complex impacts at the intersection of health and security, and the need to mitigate further gendered harms in an uncertain post-pandemic future.

## 4. Recommendations

### Gendered crises and harms

- Ensure that collective and individual commitments across WPS, Grand Bargain, Generation Equality Forum and G7 agreements, as well as the UK's commitments under the Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies, are appropriately resourced, ensuring policy coherence and implementation of all existing commitments related to gender, security and humanitarian action within the WPS agenda.
- Ensure that all staff and partners working on conflict are regularly trained in gender-sensitive conflict analysis and deploy it appropriately in all UK-funded programmes in fragile and conflict-affected states.
- Work with other governments, donors and civil society, through the GBV Action Coalition for the Generation Equality Forum and the Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies, to secure accountable commitments to increase the amount of high-quality funding for multi-sector and integrated GBV prevention and response interventions. These interventions should be accessible to, and inclusive of, women, girls and gender-diverse people and their organisations in humanitarian crises.
- Make accountability to women, girls and gender-diverse people living and working in humanitarian emergencies a condition of UK government funding, including as a means to counter sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse.

Institutionalise safe, confidential, inclusive, accessible and youth-friendly mechanisms to report all forms of abuse and access safe spaces, case management and psychosocial support services.

- Dedicate funding for the collection of a range of disaggregated and intersectional data (inclusive of gender, age, marital status and disability, among other axes of discrimination). Alongside this, develop more inclusive approaches to data collection across all humanitarian responses, in cooperation with local actors. (For example, IRC is developing a Diversity and Inclusion client feedback tool to implement IASC guidelines.<sup>26</sup>)

## Participation

- Embed a commitment to partnership and meaningful consultation with local women-, girl- and gender-diverse people-led organisations, in line with the recommendations in Beyond Consultations,<sup>vii</sup> across humanitarian responses. Require UK government officials and partners working in or on humanitarian crisis settings to work in partnership with women-, girl- and gender-diverse people-led organisations.
- Create spaces for meaningful participation, including at key global fora, at all levels of decision-making and in commitments and actions resulting from them. This includes ensuring collaborative partnership models, accessible information, funding to support participation and facilitation of visa and entry clearance processes. There should be cooperation between UK government departments, especially the FCDO and Home Office, so that relevant logistical processes move smoothly and visas are given to women, girl and gender-diverse leaders to participate fully in conferences and policy fora.

## Funding relief, recovery and resilience

- Invest in policy and programming approaches that cut across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus and address the underlying and interlinked drivers of conflict, crisis and gendered inequalities. This includes developing cross-departmental ways of working within FCDO.
- Increase and track the proportion of UK government funds reaching local women-, girl- and gender-diverse people-led organisations. Publish spend in crisis settings, using the Gender Equality Marker to allow for effective, open and transparent reporting on WPS spend. (Canada has developed a new method to track WPS spending, which the UK could use as a model for its own tracking.<sup>27</sup>)
- In line with Grand Bargain commitments, minimise and simplify reporting by local organisations as much as possible, to ensure that appropriate information is collected without creating undue administrative burdens.
- Endorse and implement the Grand Bargain’s Localisation Workstream guidance note<sup>viii</sup> on gender-responsive localisation, and specifically commit resources and political support to women’s leadership in humanitarian and protracted settings,

<sup>vii</sup> See more on Beyond Consultations: [www.beyondconsultations.org.uk](http://www.beyondconsultations.org.uk)

<sup>viii</sup> The full text of the Grand Bargain’s guidance note on gender-responsive localisation, produced by the Localisation Workstream, can be found here: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2020-05/Guidance%20note%20on%20gender%20responsive%20localisation%20May%202020.pdf>

including establishing and extending funding mechanisms that can reach women's rights organisations directly (such as the current Conflict, Stability and Security Fund aimed at women's rights organisations).

- Ensure programmatic work (including funding and proposals) is long-term, flexible and set according to the relevant local organisations' self-defined priorities, in order to support increased and sustained participation in humanitarian response at a strategic leadership level and to allow for programmatic work to adapt to changing contexts and realities in a more resilient manner.

## Gender and Women, Peace and Security in Covid-19 response

- Across Covid-19 programmes funded by the UK government, both domestically and internationally, commit to rapid gender assessments in the short term and intersectional gender–conflict analyses in the medium to long term to ensure that pandemic preparedness, response and recovery are adequately gender-responsive.
- Ensure that pandemic-related data is disaggregated by, at minimum, sex, age, marital status, racialisation and disability, and is consistently collected from the beginning and as contexts change. Such data on virus contraction, deaths, treatment and programme participants is crucial to understanding differential and intersectional impacts and programme effectiveness.
- Ensure that short- and long-term programming accounts for the differential gendered impacts of Covid-19 as well as the need for tailored, accessible communications according to country, region and intersectional identities. Engagement with communities must be informed by and designed with affected women and girls themselves. The use of social and mainstream media for public information should be monitored, including for any stigmatisation of specific groups.
- Ensure access to technologies to make online decision-making processes and consultations inclusive of and accessible to women, girls and gender-diverse people. This should include consideration for online safety, digital literacy and alternative ways to ensure that those who may be excluded – for example, those who are poor or with disabilities – are still heard.

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<sup>1</sup> CARE. 2020. Global rapid gender analysis for Covid-19. London: CARE.

<https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/publications/global-rapid-gender-analysis-for-covid-19>

<sup>2</sup> CARE 2020.

<sup>3</sup> IRC. 2020. *What happened? How the humanitarian response to COVID-19 failed to protect women and girls*. London: IRC, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> GAPS UK. 2021. *Now and the future – pandemics and crisis: gender equality, peace and security in a Covid-19 world and beyond*. London: GAPS UK. <https://gaps-uk.org/now-and-the-future-pandemics-and-crisis-gender-equality-peace-and-security-in-a-covid-19-world-and-beyond/>

<sup>5</sup> IRC 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Loft, P. and P. Brien. 2021. *Reducing the UK's aid spend in 2021*, CBP 9224. London: House of Commons Library.

<sup>7</sup> ActionAid. 2020. *Creating lasting impact: the power of women-led localised responses to Covid-19*. London: ActionAid. <https://www.actionaid.org.uk/publications/creating-lasting-impact-the-power-of-women-led-localised-responses-to-covid-19>

<sup>8</sup> GAPS UK 2021.

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The Gender and 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.

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