

International Development Committee

Peace under pressure: Protecting Women, Peace and Security

Tenth Report of Session 2024–26

HC 782

International Development Committee

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Summary

1. Historically, the UK has played an integral role as a supporter of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, which is encapsulated by Resolution 1325 of the United Nations. The UK was one of the first countries to implement a WPS National Action Plan under the Resolution in 2006¹ and continues to hold the responsibility of penholder for WPS and convenor at the UN Security Council (UNSC).
2. Our report finds that the UK has made commendable commitments to advancing and upholding the WPS agenda. Against the backdrop of an increasing number of conflicts, which are known to disproportionately impact women and girls, and a global backsliding on gender equality, these commitments are now more important more than ever. However, our report finds that commitments to the agenda on the international stage, through the UK's role as penholder and when acting as President of the UNSC, have not been upheld.
3. The Government's commitment to the policies and ambitions in the WPS National Action Plan (NAP) appears to be waning. It is understood that the meaningful inclusion of women in peace processes significantly increases the success and longevity of agreements. However, our report finds that the Government has failed to deliver on policy commitments relating to the inclusion of women, girls and marginalised groups in meaningful participation and conflict prevention. The impact of the reduction in development and gender expertise in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is significantly hindering this work.
4. We find that the Government continues to reduce funding and resourcing towards WPS, or WPS-related initiatives, despite the devastating impacts this has on women and girls. This compromises the delivery of the NAP and regresses the work of the UK and its partners, particularly Women's Rights Organisations. Additionally, there is a lack of transparency around resourcing and spending, making it difficult to track the progress of the WPS NAP.

1 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, [1325 NAPs](#), (accessed 4 March 2026)

5. We also find the decision to make staffing cuts in a climate where resourcing is already scarce to be damaging to the UK's ability to deliver on its commitments. Moreover, efforts to mainstream gender have been lacklustre and have often seen gender-specific initiatives deprioritised, further marginalising the WPS agenda.
6. Despite the Government's commitments, the monitoring and evaluation of the NAP is limited. We find that work on WPS risks being driven by activity rather than by impact. There is no integrated cross-government system for capturing and aggregating data on WPS activity, expenditure or impact, nor a consistently applied set of WPS-specific indicators. This makes assessing the impact of the NAP difficult.
7. Further still, the Government has not allowed for sufficient external oversight of and feedback on its WPS commitments, all of which hinders the development and delivery of the WPS agenda.
8. This report is intended to influence the Government's upcoming NAP refresh, which is due in spring 2026, and to provide a framework for subsequent Committee work. We hope to revisit our scrutiny of the UK's delivery of the WPS agenda once the refresh has been published.
9. We would like to thank all the courageous individuals and organisations that have taken the time to contribute to this inquiry. We hope this report goes some way towards acknowledging the challenges that women, girls and other marginalised groups face in conflict-related settings. It is for you, and for a peaceful future, that there must be renewed urgency and action from the UK Government to safeguard the future of the WPS agenda.

Introduction

10. For women and girls, war begins before the first shots are fired.² Women and girls are not just caught in the crossfire: their bodies, their health, their choices, their education, and their voices are actively targeted before, during and after a conflict.³ Conflict and its consequences often disproportionately impacts women and girls.⁴
11. The United Nations (UN) Annual Report on Women, Peace and Security 2025 reported that there were 61 active conflicts, the highest number since 1946.⁵ The world continues to grow more “violent and disorderly”.⁶ Conflict is on the rise around the world.⁷
12. According to the UN, rising conflict has impacted women and girls more than previous years.⁸ The UN reported that, between 2023–2024, four times more women and children were killed in armed conflicts than in 2021–2022.⁹ Between 2022–2024, conflict-related sexual violence documented by the UN increased by 87%.¹⁰ Women are especially affected by the consequences of conflict and instability through forced displacement, food insecurity, restricted access to jobs and education, and attacks on healthcare infrastructure.¹¹ The UK Government National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) aims to account for emerging factors such as technology, cyber conflict, and climate change, which continue to exacerbate the risks to women and girls.¹²

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- 2 Cynthia Enloe, Twelve Feminist Lessons of War, 19 September 2023
 - 3 UN Women, Speech: [There is no pathway to peace that does not begin with the protection of women and girls](#), 22 May 2025
 - 4 UN Women, [Facts and figures: Women, Peace, and security](#), 20 October 2025
 - 5 UN, [Report of the UN Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security 2025](#), 2025
 - 6 Council of Foreign Relations, [Conflicts to Watch in 2026](#), December 2025
 - 7 UN, [A New Era of Conflict and Violence](#), (accessed 4 March 2026)
 - 8 UN, [Report of the UN Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security 2025](#), October 2025
 - 9 UN, [Report of the UN Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security 2025](#), October 2025
 - 10 UN, [Report of the UN Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security 2025](#), October 2025
 - 11 UN Women, [Gender equality in peacekeeping: why it matters for global security](#), 9 May 2025; Al Jazeera, [Iran girls' school targeting likely 'deliberate'](#), 3 March 2026
 - 12 Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office ([WPS0015](#))

13. Higher levels of gender equality are “associated with a lower propensity for conflict, both between and within states”.¹³ However, our evidence points to a global “anti-gender” movement¹⁴ and backlash against gender equality and the rights of women and girls.¹⁵ These movements seek to deprioritise the role and rights of women, girls and marginalised groups.¹⁶ The UN said that in light of these challenges, gender equality faces “one of its most challenging periods in decades”.¹⁷ In October 2025, Sima Bahous, the Executive Director of UN Women, said that women and girls are increasingly shut out of peace tables and left unprotected as wars multiply, “women do not need more promises, they need power protection, and equal participation”.¹⁸
14. To address these challenges and scrutinise the UK’s approach to WPS, the report will be structured as follows:
- Chapter 1: sets out the Government’s commitments to the WPS agenda and considers its ability to turn policy into practice. It will assess whether these commitments have been upheld in multilateral forums, and whether they have been delivered through the implementation of the 2023—2027 NAP on WPS with a specific focus on participation and prevention.
 - Chapter 2: will explore the funding and resourcing challenges faced by WPS actors, and the implications this may have on the delivery of the WPS NAP. The chapter will explore the real-life consequences of these cuts to WPS programmes.
 - Chapter 3: will then examine the Government’s monitoring and evaluation of WPS commitments, highlighting gaps that cumulatively add up to a bigger accountability challenge.

13 World Development Report 2011, [Governance and Civil War onset](#), 31 August 2010

14 Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep) ([WPS0018](#))

15 UN, [Women’s Rights in Review 30 Years After Beijing](#), March 2025; Conciliation Resources ([WPS0030](#)); PeaceRep ([WPS0018](#)), Westminster Foundation for Democracy ([WPS0024](#))

16 UN, [Women’s Rights in Review 30 Years After Beijing](#), March 2025

17 UN, [Women’s Rights in Review 30 Years After Beijing](#), March 2025

18 UN, [Women still largely excluded from peace processes](#), 20 October 2025

1 The Women, Peace and Security agenda

Background to the Women, Peace and Security agenda

- 15.** In October 2025, the WPS agenda marked its 25th anniversary. UN Resolution 1325, adopted on 31 October 2000, identified actions that UN Member States and the Secretary-General should take to address the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls and to empower women and girls to contribute to international peace and security.¹⁹ Among other things, the Resolution emphasises the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and peacebuilding, and their equal participation.²⁰ Key passages of Resolution 1325 include:
- Urges Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels[...]for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict.²¹
 - Calls on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict.²²
 - Calls on all actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements to adopt a gender perspective.²³
- 16.** By 2024, over 100 UN Member States had developed National Action Plans for the implementation of Resolution 1325 and associated resolutions for women, peace and security.²⁴

19 UN, [The United Nations Security Council](#) Resolution 1325, October 2000

20 UN, [The United Nations Security Council](#) Resolution 1325, October 2000

21 UN, [The United Nations Security Council](#) Resolution 1325, October 2000

22 UN, [The United Nations Security Council](#) Resolution 1325, October 2000

23 UN, [The United Nations Security Council](#) Resolution 1325, October 2000

24 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, [1325 National Action Plans](#) (accessed 4 March 2026)

High-profile failures and the future of Resolution 1325

17. Back in October 2023, Executive Director of UN Women, Sima Bahous, said that the WPS agenda faces “weak implementation and chronic underfunding” around the world.²⁵ In March 2025, the UN said that gender equality faces “one of its most challenging periods in decades”.²⁶
18. Weak implementation and underfunding can have a real-world impact on the realities of women and girls. For example, Fawzia Koofi, a former Afghan Member of Parliament, told us that Afghanistan is now seen as a failure of the WPS agenda, following the failed 2018 peace process and the deteriorating rights of women and girls living under the Taliban regime.²⁷ Hanin Ahmed, a Sudanese activist, told our Committee that the international community had “stood idly by” as the WPS agenda “completely failed” in her country.²⁸
19. However, challenges with implementing the WPS agenda are not limited to Afghanistan and Sudan.²⁹ Fawzia Koofi went on to tell us that Afghanistan is “the front line” of risks to women but stressed that these risks “can reach anywhere, any country”.³⁰
20. Despite the goals of the WPS agenda being far from realised in many countries, Stephanie Siddall from Women for Women International argued that Resolution 1325 remains a powerful tool:

More than 100 countries and regional institutions have national and regional action plans, and it has given women in the countries that we work in the language and the legitimacy to demand a seat at the table.³¹

Stephanie Siddall added that Resolution 1325 indicates that women’s participation is not optional, but rather essential for peace and security.³² Subsequent UN resolutions – 1889 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015) and

25 UN Women, [A call for urgent transformative action](#), 25 October 2023

26 UN, [Women’s Rights in Review 30 Years After Beijing](#), March 2025

27 Q5 [Fawzia Koofi]; PeaceRep, [Is the Women, Peace, and Security agenda still relevant for Afghanistan](#), 2025, p2; The Telegraph, [Taliban allows men to beat wives – so long as they don’t break bones](#), 19 February 2026

28 Q6 [Hanin Ahmed]

29 Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, [Open letter to the Permanent Representatives to the UN: recommendations on the Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security \(WPS\)](#), 24 October 2019

30 Q8 [Fawzia Koofi]

31 Q4 [Stephanie Siddall]; Women for Women International ([WPS0032](#))

32 Q4 [Stephanie Siddall]

2493 (2019) – promote the importance of women’s active and effective participation, which includes incorporating their voices and acknowledging their experiences.³³

Turning commitments into action

21. In recent months, the UK Government has made verbal commitments to the WPS agenda on the international stage. In October 2025, Archie Young, the UK Ambassador to the General Assembly, said that the UK “remains steadfast” in its “commitment to advancing the WPS agenda globally”.³⁴ A statement made by the Foreign Secretary, Yvette Cooper, on 19 February 2026, also recognised the urgency of the situation in Sudan.³⁵
22. The UK is a UN penholder for Women, Peace and Security.³⁶ Reem Alsalem, Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls at the United Nations, told us that acting as penholder carries a “huge responsibility” and that the UK can use “global political clout and leverage” to “facilitate consensus, reaching agreements and moving deadlocks”.³⁷ However, she went on to say that, beyond facilitation, what is important as a penholder is ensuring that work is “follow[ed] through” and “implemented on the ground”.³⁸
23. Ambassador Archie Young, in his October 2025 speech, said that the UK needed to “do more” to turn commitments into action.³⁹ The UK NAP on WPS also commits to “stand up for women and girls”, including in multilateral forums.⁴⁰
24. Despite commitments to the WPS agenda, the UK’s willingness or ability to facilitate high-level discussions within the UN on WPS appears weak.⁴¹ In February 2026, the UK was serving as President of the UNSC and yet

33 UN, [The United Nations Security Council](#) Resolution 1325, October 2000; UN, [Security Council Resolutions](#) (accessed 2 March 2026)

34 HMG, [Women, Peace and Security agenda globally: UK statement at the UN Security Council](#), gov.uk, 6 October 2025

35 FCDO, [Let this be the time that the world comes together to end the cycle of bloodshed in Sudan: UK statement at the UN Security Council](#), gov.uk, 19 February 2026

36 The penholder role refers to the Member of the UN Security Council that leads the negotiation and drafting of resolutions on a particular UN Security Council agenda item. FCDO, [Twenty-five years of Women, Peace and Security](#), 24 November 2025

37 [Q56](#) [Reem Alsalem]

38 [Q56](#) [Reem Alsalem]

39 HMG, [Women, Peace and Security agenda globally: UK statement at the UN Security Council](#), gov.uk, 6 October 2025

40 HMG, [The UK Women Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023–2027](#), 23 February 2023

41 Conciliation Resources ([WPS0030](#)), para 42

the programme of work did not include any dedicated sessions on WPS.⁴² In December 2025, the Foreign Affairs Committee described the failure to convene a dedicated session on WPS in November 2024 as a “missed opportunity”.⁴³ Conciliation Resources, a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), said that historic champions of WPS have either “softened, fully withdrawn or like the UK, seemingly deprioritised the agenda”.⁴⁴

25. The evidence we received has suggested that the UK’s lack of willingness to convene dedicated WPS sessions could reflect an unwillingness to take a leading role in multilateral forums. Conciliation Resources cited the changed US position on the WPS agenda.⁴⁵ The US Secretary of Defence, Pete Hegseth, was reported to have described a WPS programme in the US Department for Defense as “yet another woke divisive/social justice initiative”.⁴⁶ Conciliation Resources went on to say that there is little evidence that the UK Government “has the ambition or means to fill the WPS leadership gap” to “influence WPS allies or blockers” in multilateral forums.⁴⁷ The Director at Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS), Eva Tabbasam, has described the Government’s commitments to WPS as “fragile”⁴⁸ and urged that the Government needs to “maintain principled leadership” on WPS even “if it is difficult”.⁴⁹
26. The UK’s 2023 International Women and Girls Strategy (agreed by the previous UK Government) acknowledged the threat of anti-gender movements. It stated that “systematic attempts by regressive actors to roll back on women’s and girls’ rights have gained momentum” and that the UK is “well-placed to step up, defend the gains and drive progress”.⁵⁰ However, concerns have been raised about the Government’s ability to translate commitments into outcomes and actions.⁵¹ For example, gender-sensitive language is a key part of promoting and therefore delivering outcomes

42 UN Security Council, [Provisional Programme of Work of the Security Council February 2026](#), (accessed 29 February 2026), 13 February 2026; The UN, [Security Council Presidency](#), (accessed 29 February 2026)

43 Foreign Affairs Committee, Second Report of Session 2024–26, [The write to protect: Britain’s pen on the world stage](#), HC 930, 1 December 2025, p40

44 Conciliation Resources ([WPS0030](#)), para 42

45 Conciliation Resources ([WPS0030](#)), para 42

46 The Hill, [Hegseth ‘proud’ to end Women, Peace and Security program](#), 29 April 2025; CNN, [Hegseth announces he’s ending Pentagon involvement in Trump initiative empowering women championed by Ivanka Trump and Rubio](#), 29 April 2025; Conciliation Resources ([WPS0030](#)), para 42

47 Conciliation Resources ([WPS0030](#)), para 43

48 [Q47](#) [Eva Tabbasam]

49 [Q7](#) [Eva Tabbasam]

50 HMG, [International Women and Girls Strategy 2023–2030](#), gov.uk, March 2023

51 Women for Women International, [UK’s response to UK Aid Cuts](#), 26th February 2025, Women for Women International ([WPS0032](#))

which contribute to gender equality.⁵² Andrea Knapp, an academic, said that as a penholder, it is considered that the UK would be involved in the drafting processes and would therefore, have the power to set the agenda, “to frame issues and establish initial language” from the outset.⁵³ However, academic Dr Paul Kirby raised concerns about the UK’s ability to hold “the line on gender sensitive language” at the UNSC, in the face of the increasing use of militarised terminology and the anti-gender movement.⁵⁴ CARE International said that ignoring gender inequality and failing to meaningfully ensure women, girls and marginalised groups can participate is not “just a missed opportunity, it is a strategic failure”.⁵⁵

27.

CONCLUSION

The future of the Women, Peace and Security agenda hangs in the balance. The agenda is more critical than ever against the backdrop of rising conflicts, a global anti-gender movement and a reported backsliding on the rights of women and girls. The UK is a penholder for Women, Peace and Security at the United Nations Security Council and has the opportunity to convene dedicated sessions to deliver actions for the agenda. However, so far, the Government is at risk of inflicting damage to its reputation as a Women, Peace and Security penholder and convenor. Further still, it appears that the Government is standing idly by whilst hard-won gains in global gender equality are lost.

28.

RECOMMENDATION

Gender equality should not become a footnote in UK diplomacy. The UK must use its clout on the international stage to strengthen the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. This means using the tools it has at its disposal. The UK should be seen to advocate for Women, Peace and Security in multilateral forums, holding the line on gender-sensitive language in resolutions, promoting strong Women, Peace and Security positions in United Nations Security Council work and prioritising the deliverability of commitments into actions.

52 FCDO Helpdesk, [Gender sensitive strategic communications interventions](#), 6 December 2018

53 Written evidence received for the Foreign Affairs Committee inquiry into The UK at the United Nations Security Council, Andrea Knapp (PhD candidate at University of Bologna) ([UKU0001](#)), September 2025

54 Queen Mary University of London ([WPS0037](#)) International Foundation for Electoral Systems ([WPS0019](#)), Conciliation Resources ([WPS0030](#)), para 13

55 CARE International UK ([WPS0038](#))

29.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government should explain why it did not convene a single dedicated session on Women, Peace and Security during its time as President of the United Nations Security Council in February 2026. The Government should set out in its response to this report what specific actions on Women, Peace and Security the UK has achieved in country-specific sessions in the last year.

30.

RECOMMENDATION

The future of Women, Peace and Security hangs in the balance and must be addressed in its entirety rather than solely through country specific work. The UK should convene a dedicated session on Women, Peace and Security the next time it is President of the United Nations Security Council.

Assessing the UK's delivery of the National Action Plan

31. The current UK NAP (2023–2027) is its fifth iteration. The Government plans to publish a refresh of the NAP in the spring.⁵⁶
32. There are four pillars of the UN's Women, Peace and Security agenda that the Government said the fifth NAP will deliver against:
- Prevention: prevention of conflict and all forms of structural and physical violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence.
 - Participation: women and girls' safety, including physical and mental health is assured and their human rights are upheld.
 - Protection: women and girls' safety the protection of women and girls' safety, including mental health.
 - Relief and Recovery: women and girls' specific relief needs are met and women's capacities to act as agents in relief and recovery are reinforced in conflict and post conflict situations.⁵⁷

56 [Q141](#) [Chris Elmore]

57 HMG, [The UK Women Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023–2027](#), 23 February 2023

33. Recognising the interconnected nature of the WPS pillars, the NAP has five strategic objectives that reflect “the UK’s priorities and ways of working”.⁵⁸ The five strategic objectives are:

- Decision-Making: increasing women’s meaningful participation, leadership and representation in decision-making processes.
- Gender-Based Violence: preventing gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, and supporting survivors to cope, recover and seek justice.
- Humanitarian and Crisis Response: supporting the needs of women and girls in crisis and ensuring they can participate and lead responses.
- Security and Justice: increasing accountability of security and justice actors to women and girls and ensuring they are responsive to their rights and needs.
- Transnational Threats: ensuring we respond to the needs of women and girls as part of our approach to transnational threats.⁵⁹

34. The Government said that these objectives are intended to “build on the UK’s role as a global leader and defender of the WPS agenda”.⁶⁰

Conflict prevention and meaningful participation

Participation

35. Women play a critical role in conflict prevention when they meaningfully participate.⁶¹ The UK NAP says that the meaningful participation of women promotes conflict prevention, conflict reduction, and conflict resolution.⁶² The Westminster Foundation for Democracy, a UK public body, told us that women have a “richness of lived experience, intimate understanding of what it takes to transform conflicts”.⁶³ Fiona Kilpatrick-Cooper, Director of Weapons and Ammunition Management at The HALO Trust, an NGO

58 HMG, [The UK Women Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023–2027](#), 23 February 2023, p7

59 HMG, [The UK Women Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023–2027](#), 23 February 2023, p7

60 HMG, [The UK Women Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023–2027](#), 23 February 2023, p7

61 United Nations Peacekeeping, [Women, Peace and Security](#), un.org (accessed 2 March 2026)

62 HMG, [The UK Women Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023–2027](#), 23 February 2023

63 Westminster Foundation for Democracy ([WPS0024](#)), para 6

dedicated to removing landmines and other dangerous debris of war, said that “empowered women and girls lead recovery, change norms and build safer, more resilient communities”.⁶⁴

- 36.** Participation also extends to peace processes. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Multilateral, Human Rights, Latin America and the Caribbean Chris Elmore MP (‘the Minister’), told us that, when women meaningfully participate in peace processes, the resulting agreement is 64% less likely to fail and 35% more likely to last for at least 15 years.⁶⁵ Despite this, he said only “9.6% of negotiations in peace processes involve women”.⁶⁶ The Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep) told us that initial analysis shared by UN Women in 2024 suggested that, in 2023, women made up only “9.6% of negotiators, 13.7% of mediators and 26.6% of signatories to peace and ceasefire agreements”.⁶⁷ The proportion of women signatories drops to 1.5% if Colombia’s agreements are excluded.⁶⁸
- 37.** Concerns have been raised regarding the Government’s ability to implement the objectives in the NAP.⁶⁹ In its analysis of the UK’s WPS NAP, GAPS said that implementation in the first two years had been “lacklustre” and that the gap between the Government’s commitments and the reality of implementation was “growing”.⁷⁰
- 38.** We heard that women remain underrepresented in peacebuilding and political processes.⁷¹ Fawzia Koofi said that there were, for example, “delegations travelling to Afghanistan” and that they were “all men”. Fawzia Koofi went on to say that the agenda is not only “pushed back by dictators and people who use power as a means of suppressing women” but also by “international allies”.⁷²
- 39.** We heard that even the domestic delivery of the agenda needs to be “strengthened”.⁷³ Several written evidence submissions raised concerns about the implementation of the NAP in Northern Ireland (NI), particularly regarding the Security and Justice and Decision-Making objectives. Sharon Burke, a contributor to this inquiry, told us that women’s voices

64 [Q33](#) [Fiona Kilpatrick-Cooper]

65 [Q113](#) [Chris Elmore]

66 [Q113](#) [Chris Elmore]

67 PeaceRep ([WPS0018](#))

68 PeaceRep ([WPS0018](#))

69 Women for Women International ([WPS0032](#))

70 Gender Action for Peace and Security ([WPS0014](#)); [Q46](#) [Reem Alsalem]

71 Dr Ade Ige-Olaobaju; Dr Al-Amin Abba Dabo; Dr Emmanuel Vanger; Dr Olalekan Adisa; Dr. Idris Ganiyu ([WPS0013](#))

72 [Q5](#) [Fawzia Koofi]

73 Dr Ade Ige-Olaobaju; Dr Al-Amin Abba Dabo; Dr Emmanuel Vanger; Dr Olalekan Adisa; Dr. Idris Ganiyu ([WPS0013](#))

are not sufficiently included within the UK’s approach to WPS.⁷⁴ Women’s Policy Group Northern Ireland told us that women’s organisations in NI have “received threats and attempts of intimidation”, which has made participation difficult.⁷⁵ With reference to NI, the International Peace Institute stressed that participation cannot be considered safe without protection of women and their rights.⁷⁶ This is in addition to violence against women and girls in the UK being described as a “national emergency” and an “epidemic of violence”.⁷⁷

Prevention

40. Contributors told our Committee that the current NAP had fewer references to prevention than previous iterations, despite prevention being considered critical for peace.⁷⁸ GAPS said that the lack of focus on prevention efforts was contributing towards “undermining WPS outcomes”.⁷⁹
41. We heard that development expertise is necessary for a “bottom-up approach” to address the root causes of conflict and engage with communities long before conflict is present.⁸⁰ In turn, this can support the delivery of prevention work. Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, previously the Prime Minister’s Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict (PSVI) 2017–2024, told us that the FCDO should empower “local expertise”.⁸¹
42. We heard concerns over a decrease in development and gender expertise in the FCDO and that the merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development has led to reduced funding and a de-prioritisation of development and gender expertise.⁸² Toni Haastrup, Professor of International Politics at the University of Manchester, said that there had been a loss of people with “relationships on the ground”.⁸³ We heard particular concern about the reduction in numbers

74 Sharon Burke ([WPS0012](#)); Women’s Policy Group Northern Ireland ([WPS0029](#))

75 Women’s Policy Group Northern Ireland ([WPS0029](#))

76 International Peace Institute, [At the Nexus of Participation and Protection: Protection-related barriers to women’s participation in Northern Ireland](#), 16 June 2021;

77 BBC, [an ‘epidemic’ of violence: The women and girls killed by men last year](#), 10 March 2026; National Police Chief’s Council (NPCC) and the College of Policing, [Call to action as VAWG epidemic deepens](#), 23 July 2024

78 Dr Paul Kirby Queen Mary University ([WPS0037](#)), Gender Action for Peace and Security ([WPS0014](#))

79 Gender Action for Peace and Security, [Assessing UK Government Action on Women, Peace and Security in 2024](#), 2024; Women for Women International ([WPS0032](#))

80 [Q69](#) [Eva Tabbasam]

81 [Q28](#) [Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon]

82 [Q71](#) [Professor Toni Haastrup]

83 [Q71](#) [Professor Toni Haastrup]; National Audit Office, [Progress with the merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office \(FCO\) and the Department for International Development \(DfID\)](#), 25 March 2024, para 1.8 and 2.22

of gender advisors.⁸⁴ According to contributors, this has had an impact on the UK's ability to implement the WPS NAP. Eva Tabbasam reported that, in Sudan and Gaza, the GAPS response team requested a gender advisor but never received that support from the FCDO.⁸⁵ In addition, she said that around 60% of FCDO development advisor positions remained vacant in November 2025.⁸⁶

43. Appearing before us in December 2025, the Minister recognised the importance of expertise but could only “hope” that expertise would not be lost.⁸⁷

44. **CONCLUSION**

The Government's commitment to implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda, through its objectives in the National Action Plan, appears to be waning. The limited attention given to prevention throughout the National Action Plan, despite the benefits for peace, is concerning. The meaningful participation of women and other marginalised groups is essential for sustainable peace and conflict resolution. However, globally and domestically, women's meaningful participation is declining. Ultimately, the translation of the commitments in the National Action Plan into practice has remained limited. Significant commitments, matched by action, will need to be made in the refresh objectives relating to prevention and participation are to be realised.

45. **RECOMMENDATION**

The Government need not re-shape its approach to Women, Peace and Security beyond the existing four pillars and five strategic objectives. Considering the increasing number of global conflicts and the integral role women play in peace, the National Action Plan refresh must prioritise meaningful participation and the contribution of women and marginalised groups in conflict prevention and related processes.

46. **RECOMMENDATION**

The UK should take a more active role in peace processes and make certain that women can meaningfully participate. This includes working with organisations and non-governmental organisations to embed accountability for breaches of Women, Peace and Security efforts. The Government should prioritise gender equality and women's rights in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes.

84 [Q69](#) [Eva Tabbasam]

85 [Q54](#) [Eva Tabbasam]

86 [Q54](#) [Eva Tabbasam]

87 [Q96](#) [Chris Elmore MP]

47.

CONCLUSION

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's development and gender experts play an essential part in delivering the participation and prevention objectives in the National Action Plan. The Government cannot expect to deliver on these commitments without this expertise. Considering the number of growing number of conflicts around the world, losing this expertise would be damaging to the future of gender equality and peace.

48.

RECOMMENDATION

The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office must not lose its development or gender expertise. The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office should commit to maintain development experts working on Women, Peace and Security with connections to local organisations and communities around the world. The Government must not cut gender advisor roles. The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office must provide gender advisors to support organisations like GAPS with their work in-country. In its response, the Government should set out how it plans to achieve this. By doing so, the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office should make sure that the delivery of the new National Action Plan does not lose its gendered development focus and expertise.

2 Funding and Resourcing

49. UK aid has been subject to successive cuts, under both the previous Government and the current Government. The Sunak Government reduced its Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment from 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) to 0.5% of GNI in November 2020. In February 2025, the Starmer Government announced yet further cuts to ODA, to 0.3% of GNI, to bolster defence spending.⁸⁸
50. The UK cuts are taking place in the context of aid cuts from the US and other major donor states. The Council on Foreign Relations said the last year has been full of a “chaos and confusion” that opened an avenue for the “downright demolition” of the aid sector.⁸⁹ It warned that the funding landscape for aid organisations, which has not recovered since the Covid era, is experiencing an “aid recession”.⁹⁰
51. According to World Vision UK, an NGO, the first round of ODA cuts dealt a “serious blow” to the UK’s capacity to fund long-term, impactful programming.⁹¹ These cuts are reported to disproportionately affect women and girls, with funding for Women’s Rights Organisations (WROs) reduced by two-thirds.⁹² GAPS said in its 2022 shadow report that 20 million fewer women and girls had access to UK-funded programming as a result of cuts to aid.⁹³ This included:
- 700,000 fewer girls supported by girls’ education programmes
 - 2 million fewer women supported by humanitarian assistance
 - 8 million fewer women and girls supported by nutrition interventions
 - 9 million fewer women supported to access clean water and sanitation.⁹⁴

88 HC Deb, 25 February 2025, [col 633](#)

89 Council on Foreign Relations, [The Great Aid Recession: 2025’s Humanitarian Crash in Nine Charts](#), 23 December 2025

90 Council on Foreign Relations, [The Great Aid Recession: 2025’s Humanitarian Crash in Nine Charts](#), 23 December 2025

91 World Vision UK ([WPS0011](#))

92 Gender Actions for Peace and Security ([WPS0014](#)), ActionAid UK ([WPS0007](#)) para 4.3

93 Gender Action for Peace and Security, [Assessing UK Government Action on Women, Peace and Security in 2021](#), 29 September 2022, p10; HMG, [UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2018 – 2022: Annual Report to Parliament 2021](#), 19 December 2018

94 Gender Action for Peace and Security, [Assessing UK Government Action on Women, Peace and Security in 2021](#), 29 September 2022, p10

52. ActionAid UK told us that the current Government’s cut in aid spending to 0.3% of GNI will have further “harmful” effects on the implementation of the WPS NAP and will “hinder” the UK’s ability to uphold the commitments made in the International Women and Girls Strategy.⁹⁵ Any reduction in UK funding for organisations and programmes which support women’s healthcare and aid, such as UKAIDS and the Women’s Integrated Sexual Health (WISH) programme, could undermine the UK’s ability to provide on-the-ground contributions to objective 2 of the WPS NAP. The actual and full impact of aid cuts on women and girls is yet to be seen.
53. In its 2025 response to the Government’s 2025 Equality Impact Assessment of ODA Programme Allocations (EIA), GAPS called for additional calculations to be carried out.⁹⁶ It noted that neither the Government’s 2025 WPS Annual Report to Parliament nor the EIA had fully assessed the implications of cuts for women and girls. It warned these cuts indicate an “indifference to the agenda beyond basic protection”.⁹⁷ The Minister said that he could not “pretend there was no impact in terms of the 0.5% to 0.3%, but decisions still need to be taken”.⁹⁸ Furthermore, the Minister of State (International Development and Africa), the Rt Hon Baroness Chapman of Darlington previously told us that the FCDO was “making some very broad-brush decisions” and that it had “not been able to do the consultation that I would like”.⁹⁹
54. We welcome the Government’s decision to fully protect spending on VAWG, WPS and PSVI at 2025/26 levels. However, this does not negate nor improve the impacts of funding cuts thus far.¹⁰⁰ As the 2026 EIA and the Foreign Secretary’s statement, made on 19 March 2026, do not indicate a precise timeframe for the protected status of funding, we are concerned the decision to “protect” as opposed to “ringfence” funding means there is still a possibility for further reductions in the future.¹⁰¹ Additionally, the 2026 EIA states “in most cases, decisions on individual programmes are yet to

95 ActionAid UK ([WPS0007](#)) para 4.3; IFES ([WPS0019](#))

96 Gender Action for Peace and Security, [GAPS Network Response to FCDO Equality Impact Assessment and Accounts](#), 12 September 2025

97 Gender Action for Peace and Security, [GAPS Network Response to FCDO Equality Impact Assessment and Accounts](#), 12 September 2025; HMG, [Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan, report to Parliament 2024 to 2025](#), 17 June 2025; FCDO, [Equality impact assessment of Official Development Assistance \(ODA\) programme allocations for 2025 to 2026](#), 2 September 2025; GAPS ([WPS0014](#))

98 [Q90](#)

99 Oral evidence taken on 13 May 2025, [Q13](#); Oral evidence taken on 3 June 2025, [Q139](#)

100 FCDO, [FCDO multi-year Official Development Assistance programme allocations 2026–2027 to 2028–2029: equal...](#), 19 March 2026

101 HMG, [Foreign Secretary statement on International Development: 19 March](#), 19 March 2026

be finalised”.¹⁰² The vague nature of this commitment does not give those working within WPS the certainty or stability required to adequately plan and implement future programming.

55. There is no dedicated budget for WPS or for the commitments made in the NAP.¹⁰³ Implementation, therefore, is not built in.¹⁰⁴ ActionAid UK told us that tangible progress “cannot be made” as a result, and that the lack of funding has made it difficult to track progress, monitor impact and ensure accountability.¹⁰⁵ A briefing paper by the London School of Economics Centre for Women, Peace and Security said that “it is impossible to establish how much the UK government has spent on WPS in the last fifteen years”.¹⁰⁶
56. The decision to raise defence spending at the expense of the aid budget has been framed as a national security issue by the Government. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for the Armed Forces) Al Carns MP, told us that, in response to growing violence around the world, there is “a requirement to reshape our defence to deal with hostile state actors”.¹⁰⁷ We welcome assurances from the Minister for the Armed Forces that human security is integrated within the Ministry of Defence’s work, particularly where it has empowered women within the armed forces and across civil society organisations.¹⁰⁸ However, increased militarisation is arguably counter-intuitive to the WPS agenda. In his 2024 annual report on WPS, *Women, peace and security: report of the secretary general*, António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, said: “the spread of militarization [...] could lead to an even more dangerous and violent decade”.¹⁰⁹ According to the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), increased defence spending without an adjoining increase in funding for WPS programming risks sidelining the WPS agenda, threatening to unravel the progress made by UK investments to date.¹¹⁰

102 FCDO, [Official Development Assistance programme allocations 2026–2027 to 2028–2029: equality impact assessment](#), 19 March 2026

103 ActionAid UK ([WPS0007](#)) para 4.1

104 ActionAid UK ([WPS0007](#)) para 4.1

105 ActionAid UK ([WPS0007](#)) para 4.1

106 LSE Centre for Women Peace and Security, [The Future of the UK’s Women, Peace and Security Policy](#), July 2022, p13

107 [Q93](#)

108 Letter from the Minister of the Armed Forces and the Minister for Multilaterals, Human Rights, Latin America and the Caribbean to the Chair regarding follow-up questions posed after the Committee’s ministerial evidence session, [12 February 2026](#)

109 UN Secretary-General, [Women and peace and security : report of the Secretary-General](#), 24 September 2024, p19

110 IFES ([WPS0019](#))

57. Despite the reduction in aid funding, in December 2025, the Minister reassured us that the WPS agenda had not been deprioritised, citing the £3.5 million expansion of the centrally managed WPS programme.¹¹¹ However, the FCDO EIA, last updated in September 2025, reported a 25% reduction to this expansion, which “may result in 50 fewer women peacebuilding organisations being supported”.¹¹² This reduction also limited the FCDO’s 2025–26 contributions to addressing gender inequality and women’s participation in peace processes, further hindering implementation of the WPS agenda.¹¹³ The EIA states that remaining funding will be prioritised for women’s rights organisations in focus countries, including Sudan and Ukraine, but at a reduced scale.¹¹⁴
58. Questions remain about the appropriateness of the use of WPS funding, even for focus countries. Kvinna till Kvinna, an NGO that supports women in conflict-affected areas, says that, in Ukraine, a large proportion of ODA for WPS is spent on paying the salaries of UK-based consultants.¹¹⁵ Its report, *Where’s the Money for Women’s Rights in Ukraine?*, found that only 16.7% of WROs receive core support, with smaller WROs struggling to access this funding.¹¹⁶
59. Despite WROs being familiar with communities and usually acting as first responders to conflict, it is estimated that less than one percent of global humanitarian aid directly reaches WROs, with the UK’s support standing at 21% lower now than in 2019.¹¹⁷ We heard that this level of funding creates a climate in which unpredictable short-term, reactive support is favoured over long-term, proactive support, leading to uncertainty around programming and pushing WROs into “survival mode”.¹¹⁸ Cuts to WROs not only affect meaningful delivery but can cause them to permanently close. A report from UN Women, published in April 2025, revealed that 90% of WROs have been financially impacted by the global “aid recession”, with 72% having to lay off staff, and only 18% anticipating staying open for one year or longer.¹¹⁹ In December 2025, the Minister said he “did not know” whether WROs were

111 [Q94](#); Letter from the Minister of the Armed Forces and the Minister for Multilaterals, Human Rights, Latin America and the Caribbean to the Chair regarding follow-up questions posed after the Committee’s ministerial evidence session, [12 February 2026](#)

112 FCDO, [Equality impact assessment of Official Development Assistance \(ODA\) programme allocations for 2025 to 2026](#), 2 September 2025

113 FCDO, [Equality impact assessment of Official Development Assistance \(ODA\) programme allocations for 2025 to 2026](#), 2 September 2025

114 FCDO, [Equality impact assessment of Official Development Assistance \(ODA\) programme allocations for 2025 to 2026](#), 2 September 2025

115 Kvinna till Kvinna ([WPS0025](#))

116 Kvinna till Kvinna, [Where’s the Money for Women’s Rights in Ukraine?](#), 12 March 2025, p3

117 ActionAid UK ([WPS0007](#)) para 8.2; IFES ([WPS0019](#))

118 Kvinna till Kvinna ([WPS0025](#))

119 UN Women, [At Breaking Point: the Impact of Foreign Aid Cuts on Women’s Organisations in Humanitarian Crisis](#), April 2025, p9

being funded to the same extent as a few years ago.¹²⁰ The FCDO was also unable to share with us a list of partnerships and organisations working on WPS.¹²¹ This raises concern that funding decisions are made without consulting those most affected.

60. CONCLUSION

There is a lack of transparency surrounding the UK’s Women, Peace and Security spending, including how much Official Development Assistance is directed towards Women’s Rights Organisations, making it difficult for civil society organisations and other actors to track and assess progress on Women, Peace and Security.

61. RECOMMENDATION

As part of its National Action Plan refresh, the Government should set out how Women, Peace and Security objectives will be fully resourced and prioritised in the context of Official Development Assistance cuts, and how associated funding will be strategically distributed. The Government should ringfence multi-year funding for Women, Peace and Security programming, plans for which should also be published and shared with our Committee.

FCDO staffing cuts

- 62.** Professor Toni Hastrup, Professor of International Politics at the University of Manchester, said that the UK excels in its expertise and has “set the standard for best practice”.¹²² However, the Minister told us that the FCDO plans a 15%–25% staffing cut within the Department.¹²³ Professor Hastrup called this a “very bad idea”.¹²⁴ Despite these cuts, the Minister reassured us that WPS “clearly remains a political priority”.¹²⁵ When asked about the impact of staffing cuts and high staff turnover on policy and programme delivery, the Minister told us, “the FCDO will be a smaller, more agile organisation, better able to deliver tangible benefits”.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ [Q131](#)

¹²¹ Letter from the Minister of the Armed Forces and the Minister for Multilaterals, Human Rights, Latin America and the Caribbean to the Chair regarding follow-up questions posed after the Committee’s ministerial evidence session, [12 February 2026](#)

¹²² [Q48](#)

¹²³ [Q94](#)

¹²⁴ [Q48](#); [Q71](#); [Q69](#) [Eva Tabbasum]

¹²⁵ [Q94](#)

¹²⁶ Letter from the Minister of the Armed Forces and the Minister for Multilaterals, Human Rights, Latin America and the Caribbean to the Chair regarding follow-up questions posed after the Committee’s ministerial evidence session, [12 February 2026](#)

63. CONCLUSION

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has assured us it remains committed to the Women, Peace and Security agenda despite staffing cuts. However, it has had difficulty in upholding its commitments in the National Action Plan with current resourcing. It is unclear how a smaller organisation with fewer resources and reduced capacity will be better able to deliver on commitments.

Gender mainstreaming

- 64.** The FCDO and the Ministry Of Defence (MOD) reiterated their commitment to “mainstreaming” support for women and girls.¹²⁷ On 19 March 2026, the Foreign Secretary announced an “ambitious gender mainstreaming approach” to “accelerate progress” on women and girls policies. The approach includes an “increase on gender equality ODA target” so that by 2030 “at least 90% of bilateral programmes have a focus on gender equality”.¹²⁸ While we heard from contributors that this is the correct goal in principle, Eva Tabbasam, Director of GAPS, argued that the UK “does not have the institutionalisation” to mainstream WPS across government.¹²⁹ She said that if the transition towards gender mainstreaming is proposed as a substitute to stand-alone gender programming, it risks diluting the WPS agenda, or may “effectively make it invisible”.¹³⁰ The NGO Conciliation Resources said that there have been missed opportunities to integrate WPS objectives into actions where WPS is not a primary objective, and that some mainstreaming requests made of partners by the Government have been “tokenistic and potentially damaging”.¹³¹
- 65.** Moreover, there has been a shift in policy to focus on national security, a departure from previous policies that prioritised addressing instability by building societal resilience through ODA.¹³² This shift towards national security is exhibited in the change from the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) to the Integrated Security Fund (ISF). The CSSF was an ear-marked fund and the main funding mechanism supporting UK WPS programming, which committed to allocating 15% of its resources to WPS–

¹²⁷ [Q145](#) [Al Carns MP, Chris Elmore MP]; [Q146](#) [Al Carns MP, Chris Elmore MP]

¹²⁸ FCDO, [FCDO multi-year Official Development Assistance programme allocations 2026–2027 to 2028–2029: equal...](#), 19 March 2026; [Official Development Assistance \(ODA\) programme allocations 2026/27 – 2028/29](#) HCWS1425, 19 March 2026

¹²⁹ [Q51](#); [Q50](#)

¹³⁰ [Q50](#)

¹³¹ Conciliation resources ([WPS0030](#)) para 32

¹³² Professor Catherine Turner ([WPS0004](#))

related work.¹³³ However, we have heard the CSSF was replaced with the ISF, a broader, reportedly more “opaque” fund that no longer explicitly prioritises WPS and reduces transparency in funding decisions.¹³⁴

66. In December 2025, the Foreign Secretary announced support to tackle abuse faced by women and girls as part of a “wider £4.85 million Integrated Security Fund package”.¹³⁵ This included measures to tackle violence against women and girls (VAWG) both on and offline, in the UK and internationally, citing “rape increasingly being used as a weapon of war”, and that in the UK, “1 in 8 women experienced domestic abuse, stalking or sexual assault last year, with rape at record highs”.¹³⁶
67. However, in March 2026, the Minister of State (Minister for Security) Dan Jarvis MP said that the Government had taken the decision to “close the standalone Gender and National Security portfolio for 2026/27”, which sits within the Integrated Security Fund.¹³⁷ This is despite the FCDO having told us that the ISF had been instrumental in “highly impactful programmes” on WPS.¹³⁸ One specific example of ISF-funded work provided by the FCDO focused on supporting 24 women’s rights organisations in Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen with funding which “enable[d] participation” and informal mechanisms for the “prevention and resolution of conflict”.¹³⁹ This mixed messaging and funding picture raises serious concerns about the future of the ISF, the impact this cut will have, and the UK’s commitments to preventing and tackling VAWG.

133 Women’s Spaces Consortium ([WPS0040](#))

134 Women’s Spaces Consortium ([WPS0040](#))

135 FCDO, [New international coalition launched to violence against women and girls](#) globally, 2 December 2025; On 18 November 2025, the Minister for Security had set out the Integrated Security Fund allocations for the financial year 2025–26 [Integrated Security Fund: Allocations for Financial Year 2025–26](#), HCWS1066, 18 November 2025

136 FCDO, [New international coalition launched to violence against women and girls](#) globally, 2 December 2025

137 [UK Integrated Security Fund](#) PQ 113276, 3 March 2026

138 FCDO ([WPS0015](#))

139 Gender Action for Peace and Security ([WPS0014](#))

68.

CONCLUSION

The Government has not learned lessons from the first round of aid cuts and continues to enact policy changes that are devastating to the realities and futures of women, girls and marginalised groups. We welcome the Government's commitment to ensure women and girls are a priority in UK foreign policy. The announced gender mainstreaming approach to improve their rights in foreign and development policy levers is concerning in the context of staff cuts and a loss of departmental expertise. Inadequate funding and mainstreaming may compromise delivery of the National Action Plan, as well as the broader Women, Peace, and Security agenda.

69.

CONCLUSION

The commitments in the current National Action Plan lack dedicated funding, meaning that commitments are not resourced and their implementation is largely dependent on political will.

70.

RECOMMENDATION

To guarantee the sustainability of Women, Peace and Security, a stable, ringfenced budget focused on flexible multi-year funding would protect against global socio-political changes and pressures. It would also allow Women's Rights Organisations and other partners to strategically plan and act both proactively and reactively to crises. Without this, the UK's status as leader is left in a fragile state. We are concerned that mainstreaming is becoming the administrative lexicon for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office dropping their focus on an issue.

71.

RECOMMENDATION

In response to this report, the Department should provide details to the Committee on existing mechanisms for coordinating meaningfully between Government Departments, or how it intends to establish systematic coordination. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office should report findings back to the Committee within six months of this report's publication.

3 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring the UK's commitments

- 72.** The Women, Peace and Security NAP 2023–2027 states that it has an “improved the framework for monitoring and evaluation”.¹⁴⁰ The Government said that it commits to utilising “appropriate, localised indicators” to monitor in-country activity and indicators.¹⁴¹ A set of draft indicators is in Annex A of the NAP.¹⁴² The Government said that these objectives were due to be finalised through a Year One baseline study, an early benchmark assessment for future evaluation of the UK’s WPS commitments, which was due in 2023.¹⁴³ The FCDO said that, although it has completed the baseline study, it will remain an internal document.¹⁴⁴
- 73.** The Government reported that, as of December 2024, 94% of NAP commitments were “in progress”, and it will utilise the internal baseline data to “assess progress towards the strategic objectives in future”.¹⁴⁵ However, GAPS said that engagement with implementing departments producing figures are “vague and imprecise”.¹⁴⁶ This has left external actors unable to assess the scope, reach or effect of UK WPS interventions.¹⁴⁷ Academic Paul Kirby said that the current monitoring system makes “conclusive accounting of its impact challenging, if not impossible”.¹⁴⁸
- 74.** The Minister for the Armed Forces and Emily Maltman, Head of Gender and Children in Conflict Department at the FCDO, acknowledged the structural challenges in monitoring WPS delivery and impact across dispersed

140 HMG, [The UK Women Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023–2027](#), 23 February 2023, p 8

141 The UK WPS NAP outlines five strategic objectives: Decision-Making, Gender-based violence, Humanitarian and crisis response, Security and Justice, Transnational threats.

142 HMG, [The UK Women Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023–2027](#), 23 February 2023, p 11 and p38 – 47

143 HMG, [The UK Women Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023–2027](#), 23 February 2023, p 8 and p11, p 38– 47 ; Gender Action for Peace and Security ([WPS0014](#)); Queen Mary University of London ([WPS0037](#)) ActionAid ([WPS007](#)) para 3.1

144 FCDO ([WPS0015](#))

145 FCDO ([WPS0015](#))

146 Gender Action for Peace and Security ([WPS0014](#))

147 Gender Action for Peace and Security ([WPS0014](#))

148 Queen Mary University of London ([WPS0037](#))

programmes, multiple funding streams and complex country contexts.¹⁴⁹ Emily Maltman said that WPS programming is delivered by “lots of different teams in lots of different countries”, making comprehensive data collection “a challenge”.¹⁵⁰ The Minister for the Armed Forces went on to say that “we can’t put our finger on the specific data” when assessing the impact of UK WPS programmes.¹⁵¹ According to Emily Maltman, current monitoring relies on internal reporting, implementing partner updates, field missions, and ODA Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) markers, which do not specifically capture WPS outcomes.¹⁵²

75. However, in December 2025, Ministers from both the FCDO and MOD expressed their willingness to strengthen data capture and impact assessment, including during the forthcoming NAP refresh.¹⁵³ In this context of cuts to general ODA and specific WPS funding, the need for effective monitoring systems is even more urgent.¹⁵⁴ The Minister for the Armed Forces stated that ministers would “welcome work on how we measure the effectiveness” and establish mechanisms that “hold us to account” describing this as “probably the most impactful thing we can do.”¹⁵⁵ However, no detailed timeline or framework for implementation of such mechanisms has been set out, despite the current NAP cycle having surpassed its midpoint.¹⁵⁶
76. Transparency and systematic monitoring are fundamental principles of accountable government.¹⁵⁷ Professor Toni Hastrup, Professor of International Politics, stated that while parliamentary scrutiny is a “starting point”, accountability remains weak without embedded monitoring and evaluation that is “not superficial but one from which we can learn”.¹⁵⁸ CARE International UK told us that the absence of WPS-specific financial tracking, baseline data and a functioning MEL framework undermines accountability and limits opportunities for advocacy.¹⁵⁹

149 [Q104–Q106](#) [Emily Maltman, Chris Elmore, Al Carns]; [Q133–135](#) [Emily Maltman]; [Q139–140](#) [Emily Maltman, Al Carns]; [Q149](#) [Al Carns]

150 [Q134](#) [Emily Maltman]

151 [Q97](#) [Al Carns]

152 [Q104–105](#) [Chris Elmore, Emily Maltman]; [Q139](#) [Emily Maltman]

153 [Q98](#) [Al Carns] [Q131](#) [Al Carns] [Q149](#) [Chris Elmore]

154 FCDO, [Equality impact assessment of ODA programme allocations](#), 2 September 2025

155 [Q131](#) [Al Carns]

156 [Q132](#) [Al Carns]; [Q133](#) [Emily Maltman]; [Q99](#) [Al Carns]; [Q149](#) [Chris Elmore]

157 Queen Mary University of London ([WPS0037](#)); CARE International UK ([WPS0038](#));

158 [Q50](#) [Toni Hastrup]

159 CARE International UK ([WPS0038](#))

- 77.** A number of contributors to this inquiry told us that clear indicators and monitoring systems are essential to ensuring the implementation of WPS commitments and assessing impact.¹⁶⁰ The Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform said that data capture challenges should not inhibit the immediate development of quantitative and qualitative monitoring and reporting on the UK's WPS programme delivery and impact.¹⁶¹ Eva Tabbasam, said that there is currently no system to “pinpoint” the Government’s progress or implementation of NAP commitments.¹⁶²
- 78.** Reem Alsalem, United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, said that mainstreaming is only effective when supplemented by robust, disaggregated data and trend analysis of women’s participation and protection outcomes.¹⁶³ Eva Tabbasam told us that, without proper tracking, “it will be really hard to say how well gender mainstreaming will have gone across Government in two years’ time”.¹⁶⁴
- 79.** The gap in monitoring has real-life consequences. WPS programme tracking in Ukraine depends on “scattered references” and fragmented financial and project performance data.¹⁶⁵ Despite ‘Participation’ being a key objective under NAP strategic objective 1, information on women’s participation in peace processes and local-level outcomes is limited by a lack of robust indicators and monitoring frameworks.¹⁶⁶ CARE International warned that an “absence of targets and lack of data undermines accountability, denies entry points for advocacy and provides few incentives to invest”.¹⁶⁷
- 80.** Afro Innovation Group, a consortium of 30 civil society organisations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, said there is a lack of awareness of UK reporting mechanisms and in-country monitoring processes. This limits local organisations’ ability to hold implementing agencies accountable, track the effectiveness of WPS programming, and ensure that aid reaches women and girls most affected by conflict.¹⁶⁸ This is despite the

160 Dr Georgina Holmes (Senior Lecturer in Politics and International Studies at The Open University), and Dr Laura McLeod (Senior Lecturer in International Politics at University of Manchester) ([WPS0033](#)); CARE International UK ([WPS0038](#)); [Q52](#) [Eva Tabbasam]; [Q55](#) [Eva Tabbasam]; Queen Mary University of London ([WPS0037](#))

161 The Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep) ([WPS0018](#)); Dr Georgina Holmes (Senior Lecturer in Politics and International Studies at The Open University), and Dr Laura McLeod (Senior Lecturer in International Politics at University of Manchester) ([WPS0033](#)); CARE International UK ([WPS0038](#)); [Q52](#) [Eva Tabbasam]

162 [Q55](#) [Eva Tabassam]

163 [Q51](#) [Reem Alsalem]

164 [Q58](#) [Eva Tabbasam]

165 Andra-Lucia Martinescu [WPS0041](#) paras 4–5

166 HMG, [The UK Women Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023–2027](#), 23 February 2023 (accessed 23 February 2026) p 12; Andra-Lucia Martinescu ([WPS0041](#)) paras 4–5; The Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep) ([WPS0018](#))

167 CARE International UK ([WPS0038](#))

168 Afro Innovation Group ([WPS0042](#))

commitments in the NAP to in-country reporting and the proven benefits of utilising local data to obtain accurate data on progress, challenges and impact.¹⁶⁹

81. Nevertheless, some monitoring commitments have been delivered. Annex A of the NAP includes a toolkit to “support and mainstream gender sensitivity” in counter-terrorism and violent extremism work, which was referenced in the June 2025 report to Parliament.¹⁷⁰ However, these reports often show what has been done, but not what difference it has made, and there is a lack of analysis of how women and girls are affected.¹⁷¹ Effective monitoring must utilise quantitative data, such as programme data, participation rates and funding allocations, with qualitative approaches that capture women’s participation, lived experience and influence in decision-making processes.¹⁷² Without robust data, reporting on women’s participation risks recording only formal activity over real influence or measurable impact on the ground.¹⁷³
82. Significant expertise and data exist outside Government that could address these gaps.¹⁷⁴ Civil society organisations and academic institutions routinely generate quantitative and qualitative evidence on women’s participation, protection outcomes, and lived experience in conflict-affected contexts.¹⁷⁵ Professor Toni Hastrup said that these organisations and institutions could

169 Afro Innovation Group ([WPS0042](#)); HMG, [The UK Women Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023–2027](#), 23 February 2023, p 11; The Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep) ([WPS0018](#)); MAG (Mines Advisory Group) ([WPS0031](#)); [Q51](#) [Reem Alsalem]

170 HMG, [The UK Women Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023–2027](#), 23 February 2023 (accessed 23 February 2026) p 44; HMG, [Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan, report to Parliament 2024 to 2025](#), 17 June 2025; Dr Georgina Holmes (Senior Lecturer in Politics and International Studies at The Open University), and Dr Laura McLeod (Senior Lecturer in International Politics at University of Manchester) ([WPS0033](#))

171 Dr Georgina Holmes (Senior Lecturer in Politics and International Studies at The Open University), and Dr Laura McLeod (Senior Lecturer in International Politics at University of Manchester) ([WPS0033](#))

172 The Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep) ([WPS0018](#)); MAG (Mines Advisory Group) ([WPS0031](#)); [Q51](#) [Reem Alsalem]

173 The Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep) ([WPS0018](#)); MAG (Mines Advisory Group) ([WPS0031](#))

174 Professor Toni Hastrup (Professor & Chair in Global Politics at University of Manchester) ([WPS0034](#)) para 7–8; Dr Georgina Holmes (Senior Lecturer in Politics and International Studies at The Open University), and Dr Laura McLeod (Senior Lecturer in International Politics at University of Manchester) ([WPS0033](#)); Gender Action for Peace and Security ([WPS0014](#));

175 MAG (Mines Advisory Group) ([WPS0031](#)); The Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep) ([WPS0018](#)); [Q61](#) [Toni Hastrup]

provide contextualised evidence to “nuance some of the numbers to which the FCDO might not have access,” yet sustained engagement mechanisms are absent.¹⁷⁶

- 83.** The Government has expressed a willingness to work with external experts. The NAP commits to engaging civil society as a “key strategic partner”.¹⁷⁷ The Minister for the Armed Forces said that the Government would benefit from “engagement from within civil society and parliamentarians” around the forthcoming refresh.¹⁷⁸ A year and a half into this Parliament, we heard that consultation has largely been concentrated at later stages of the process, such as during the drafting of the NAP.¹⁷⁹ This has reduced opportunities for knowledge sharing and for collecting lived-experience data from organisations working directly with women in conflict-affected contexts. This lack of engagement limits the Government’s ability to adapt programming based on experience of what works, therefore undermining the delivery of the WPS agenda and translating commitments into outcomes.¹⁸⁰
- 84.** During our December 2025 evidence session, we asked whether a draft of the refreshed NAP could be shared ahead of publication.¹⁸¹ In subsequent correspondence, the Government said that it would “consider” sharing a copy in advance.¹⁸² We have not been provided with a draft of the refreshed NAP.

176 [Q61–65](#) [Toni Hastrup]

177 HMG, [The UK Women Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023–2027](#), 23 February 2023, p 32; [Q63](#); Gender Action for Peace and Security, [Assessing UK Government Action on Women, Peace and Security in 2024](#), 1 July 2024, p 10

178 [Q132](#) [Al Carns]

179 [Q63](#) [Professor Hastrup]

180 [Q104–Q106](#) [Emily Maltman, Chris Elmore, Al Carns]; [Q133–135](#); [Q139–140](#) [Emily Maltman, Al Carns]; [Q149](#) [Al Carns]

181 [Q77](#) [Noah Law]

182 [Q77](#) [Chris Elmore]

85.

CONCLUSION

The lack of an operational Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning framework is not a technical issue but a practical barrier to accountability, oversight, and outcome-focused programming. Current reporting risks being activity-driven rather than impact-driven, undermining efforts to improve the lives of women and girls in conflict-affected contexts. Despite commitments in the National Action Plan, there is no integrated cross-government system for capturing and aggregating data on Women, Peace and Security activity, expenditure or impact, nor a consistently applied set of Women, Peace and Security-specific indicators. The absence of baseline data and an operational Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning framework at the midpoint of the National Action Plan cycle limits the ability of the Government and Parliament to assess whether interventions are delivering measurable improvements. In the context of Official Development Assistance cuts and reductions in staff and resourcing, this also represents poor value for money, as resources are not systematically tracked or assessed.

86.

RECOMMENDATION

As part of the Spring 2026 refresh of the National Action Plan, the Government must establish and publish a cross-government monitoring framework for Women, Peace and Security, including a clear and consistently applied set of Women, Peace and Security-specific indicators capable of assessing both outputs and impact.

87.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government must establish a biennial engagement mechanism with parliamentarians, civil society, and academic experts to review and refine National Action Plan indicators and reporting. Existing data on women's participation, lived experience, and programme impact must be incorporated into the UK's monitoring framework, enabling meaningful oversight and accountability of Women, Peace and Security implementation.

88.

CONCLUSION

Given the Government's stated commitment to meaningful engagement, we consider it to be disappointing that a copy of the National Action Plan has not been shared with us in advance of publication. Earlier sharing would have strengthened transparency and supported effective parliamentary scrutiny.

Accountability and scrutiny

89. Parliamentary oversight is a core mechanism for holding Government to account on delivery of the WPS commitments.¹⁸³ The 2023–2027 NAP commits to “transparency on its progress against the NAP”, including continuous engagement with allparty parliamentary group on WPS and civil society, and better “external transparency mechanisms”.¹⁸⁴ However, according to contributors to this inquiry, the decision to shift from annual reporting to biennial reporting to Parliament in the latest NAP has reduced the frequency of formal oversight. This has curtailed opportunities for sustained ministerial questioning and opportunities for transparency, dialogue and assessment of NAP implementation.¹⁸⁵ ActionAid UK said that annual reporting provides a “crucial opportunity for accountability by civil society and WROs”.¹⁸⁶ GAPS said that this is even more vital when the current MEL framework and localised indicators remain insufficient.¹⁸⁷
90. The Minister indicated in December that the reporting timeline “is something that we can think about as part of the review that will take place” in 2026.¹⁸⁸ He said that this depended on establishing “correct accounting mechanisms”.¹⁸⁹ The Minister for the Armed Forces said that shorter reporting cycles risked increasing preparations to “get evidence rather than delivering”.¹⁹⁰ However, ActionAid UK said that the removal of annual reporting is a “serious regression” in WPS reporting, and previous governments had been able to implement annual reporting.¹⁹¹
91. The Women, Peace and Security Bill, which passed the House of Lords but is unlikely to be debated in the House of Commons in this Session, proposes placing annual reporting on a statutory footing, including reporting on PSVI,

183 Westminster Foundation for Democracy ([WPS0024](#)) para 33

184 HMG, [The UK Women Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023–2027](#), 23 February 2023, p 8–37

185 Professor Toni Hastrup ([WPS0034](#)) CARE International UK ([WPS0038](#)); Gender Action for Peace and Security, [Assessing UK Government Action on Women, Peace and Security in 2024](#), 1 July 2024 (Accessed 23 February 2026); Gender Action for Peace and Security ([WPS0014](#)); ActionAid ([WPS007](#)) para 3.2

186 ActionAid ([WPS007](#)) para 3.2

187 Gender Action for Peace and Security ([WPS0014](#)); Gender Action for Peace and Security, [Assessing UK Government Action on Women, Peace and Security in 2024](#), 1 July 2024, p 11

188 [Q138](#) [Chris Elmore]

189 [Q138](#) [Chris Elmore]

190 [Q138](#) [Al Carns]

191 ActionAid [WPS007](#) para 3.2; HMG, [Women, Peace and security National Action Plan 2018–2022](#), January 2018, p 24; FCDO [United Kingdom National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2014–2017](#) p 9

underscoring the centrality of regular parliamentary scrutiny to effective accountability.¹⁹² However, it is our understanding that this Bill is not currently supported by the Government.

92. Internal monitoring, such as the WPS NAP Steering Board, is another mechanism intended for “Ministers, Directors, CSO [Civil Society Organisations]” to meet annually for “external scrutiny” of the NAP.¹⁹³ The Minister of State (Europe, North America and Overseas Territories) Stephen Doughty MP referenced the annual Ministerial Steering Board as part of the “robust governance structure...to ensure accountability and transparency” in delivering the NAP on 24 July 2025.¹⁹⁴ However, the *GAPS 2024 Shadow Report* expressed concern that two years into the NAP, it had yet to meet.¹⁹⁵ There has been no indication from the Government that the Steering Board has met since the General Election.
93. Alongside formal reporting, the NAP designates the quarterly Cross-Whitehall Working Group as a mechanism for daytoday coordination and oversight and engagement with external stakeholders.¹⁹⁶ However, GAPS states the current format “does not permit meaningful participation of civil society”.¹⁹⁷ Multiple external stakeholders suggested that meetings are convened at short notice, departmental updates are no longer circulated in advance, and the presentation-led format restricts meaningful dialogue and civil society engagement.¹⁹⁸ In written evidence, GAPS said that progress reports should be shared at least two weeks before meetings.¹⁹⁹ Academic Paul Kirby stated that civil society and academic stakeholders have attempted to give feedback to improve the structure, which have “not been taken up” so far.²⁰⁰

192 [Women, Peace and Security Bill \[HL\]](#), clause 1(2); [Q35](#) [Fiona Kilpatrick-Cooper]

193 HMG, [The UK Women Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023–2027](#), 23 February 2023, p 37; [Q136](#)

194 [Conflict Resolution: Women](#) PQ 67377, 24 July 2025

195 Gender Action for Peace and Security, [Assessing UK Government Action on Women, Peace and Security in 2024](#), 1 July 2024, p 11; HMG, [The UK Women Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023–2027](#), 23 February 2023, p 37

196 HMG, [The UK Women Peace and Security National Action Plan 2023–2027](#), 23 February 2023 (accessed 23 February 2026) p 37

197 Gender Action for Peace and Security ([WPS0014](#))

198 Queen Mary University of London ([WPS0037](#)); Gender Action for Peace and Security ([WPS0014](#)); ActionAid ([WPS0007](#)) para 3.3.

199 Gender Action for Peace and Security, [Assessing UK Government Action on Women, Peace and Security in 2024](#), 1 July 2024, p 10

200 Queen Mary University of London ([WPS0037](#))

94.

CONCLUSION

The Government has not allowed for sufficient external oversight and feedback on its Women, Peace and Security commitments. The shift from annual to biennial reporting has reduced opportunities for meaningful scrutiny. This weakens transparency and limits the ability of Parliament and civil society to assess whether commitments are delivering measurable improvements for women and girls.

95.

CONCLUSION

Backing the Women, Peace and Security Private Member's Bill would have been a significant demonstration of the Government's commitments to the agenda. However, the Government has indicated that it does not yet support it. We are concerned about the future of Women, Peace and Security and the extent of the Government's commitment and ability to deliver against National Action Plan objectives in the run up to the refresh.

96.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government must reinstate annual reporting to Parliament on Women, Peace and Security implementation following the 2026 National Action Plan refresh and commit to reporting which integrates progress on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, as set out in the Women, Peace and Security Bill. The Government must also review and reform the structure of engagement forums to strengthen opportunities for external scrutiny and accountability.

Conclusions and recommendations

The Women, Peace and Security agenda

1. The future of the Women, Peace and Security agenda hangs in the balance. The agenda is more critical than ever against the backdrop of rising conflicts, a global anti-gender movement and a reported backsliding on the rights of women and girls. The UK is a penholder for Women, Peace and Security at the United Nations Security Council and has the opportunity to convene dedicated sessions to deliver actions for the agenda. However, so far, the Government is at risk of inflicting damage to its reputation as a Women, Peace and Security penholder and convenor. Further still, it appears that the Government is standing idly by whilst hard-won gains in global gender equality are lost. (Conclusion, Paragraph 27)
2. Gender equality should not become a footnote in UK diplomacy. The UK must use its clout on the international stage to strengthen the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. This means using the tools it has at its disposal. The UK should be seen to advocate for Women, Peace and Security in multilateral forums, holding the line on gender-sensitive language in resolutions, promoting strong Women, Peace and Security positions in United Nations Security Council work and prioritising the deliverability of commitments into actions. (Recommendation, Paragraph 28)
3. The Government should explain why it did not convene a single dedicated session on Women, Peace and Security during its time as President of the United Nations Security Council in February 2026. The Government should set out in its response to this report what specific actions on Women, Peace and Security the UK has achieved in country-specific sessions in the last year. (Recommendation, Paragraph 29)
4. The future of Women, Peace and Security hangs in the balance and must be addressed in its entirety rather than solely through country specific work. The UK should convene a dedicated session on Women, Peace and Security the next time it is President of the United Nations Security Council. (Recommendation, Paragraph 30)

5. The Government's commitment to implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda, through its objectives in the National Action Plan, appears to be waning. The limited attention given to prevention throughout the National Action Plan, despite the benefits for peace, is concerning. The meaningful participation of women and other marginalised groups is essential for sustainable peace and conflict resolution. However, globally and domestically, women's meaningful participation is declining. Ultimately, the translation of the commitments in the National Action Plan into practice has remained limited. Significant commitments, matched by action, will need to be made in the refresh objectives relating to prevention and participation are to be realised. (Conclusion, Paragraph 44)
6. The Government need not re-shape its approach to Women, Peace and Security beyond the existing four pillars and five strategic objectives. Considering the increasing number of global conflicts and the integral role women play in peace, the National Action Plan refresh must prioritise meaningful participation and the contribution of women and marginalised groups in conflict prevention and related processes. (Recommendation, Paragraph 45)
7. The UK should take a more active role in peace processes and make certain that women can meaningfully participate. This includes working with organisations and non-governmental organisations to embed accountability for breaches of Women, Peace and Security efforts. The Government should prioritise gender equality and women's rights in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. (Recommendation, Paragraph 46)
8. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's development and gender experts play an essential part in delivering the participation and prevention objectives in the National Action Plan. The Government cannot expect to deliver on these commitments without this expertise. Considering the number of growing number of conflicts around the world, losing this expertise would be damaging to the future of gender equality and peace. (Conclusion, Paragraph 47)
9. The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office must not lose its development or gender expertise. The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office should commit to maintain development experts working on Women, Peace and Security with connections to local organisations and communities around the world. The Government must not cut gender advisor roles. The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office must provide gender advisors to support organisations like GAPS with their work in-country. In its response, the Government should set out how it plans to achieve this. By doing so, the Foreign Commonwealth and

Development Office should make sure that the delivery of the new National Action Plan does not lose its gendered development focus and expertise. (Recommendation, Paragraph 48)

Funding & Resourcing

10. There is a lack of transparency surrounding the UK's Women, Peace and Security spending, including how much Official Development Assistance is directed towards Women's Rights Organisations, making it difficult for civil society organisations and other actors to track and assess progress on Women, Peace and Security. (Conclusion, Paragraph 60)
11. As part of its National Action Plan refresh, the Government should set out how Women, Peace and Security objectives will be fully resourced and prioritised in the context of Official Development Assistance cuts, and how associated funding will be strategically distributed. The Government should ringfence multi-year funding for Women, Peace and Security programming, plans for which should also be published and shared with our Committee. (Recommendation, Paragraph 61)
12. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has assured us it remains committed to the Women, Peace and Security agenda despite staffing cuts. However, it has had difficulty in upholding its commitments in the National Action Plan with current resourcing. It is unclear how a smaller organisation with fewer resources and reduced capacity will be better able to deliver on commitments. (Conclusion, Paragraph 63)
13. The Government has not learned lessons from the first round of aid cuts and continues to enact policy changes that are devastating to the realities and futures of women, girls and marginalised groups. New sentence here: We welcome the Government's commitment to ensure women and girls are a priority in UK foreign policy. The announced gender mainstreaming approach to improve their rights in foreign and development policy levers is concerning in the context of staff cuts and a loss of departmental expertise. Inadequate funding and mainstreaming may compromise delivery of the National Action Plan, as well as the broader Women, Peace, and Security agenda. (Conclusion, Paragraph 68)
14. The commitments in the current National Action Plan lack dedicated funding, meaning that commitments are not resourced and their implementation is largely dependent on political will. (Conclusion, Paragraph 69)
15. To guarantee the sustainability of Women, Peace and Security, a stable, ringfenced budget focused on flexible multi-year funding would protect against global socio-political changes and pressures. It would also allow

Women's Rights Organisations and other partners to strategically plan and act both proactively and reactively to crises. Without this, the UK's status as leader is left in a fragile state. We are concerned that mainstreaming is becoming the administrative lexicon for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office dropping their focus on an issue. (Recommendation, Paragraph 70)

16. In response to this report, the Department should provide details to the Committee on existing mechanisms for coordinating meaningfully between Government Departments, or how it intends to establish systematic coordination. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office should report findings back to the Committee within six months of this report's publication. (Recommendation, Paragraph 71)

Monitoring and Evaluation

17. The lack of an operational Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning framework is not a technical issue but a practical barrier to accountability, oversight, and outcome-focused programming. Current reporting risks being activity-driven rather than impact-driven, undermining efforts to improve the lives of women and girls in conflict-affected contexts. Despite commitments in the National Action Plan, there is no integrated cross-government system for capturing and aggregating data on Women, Peace and Security activity, expenditure or impact, nor a consistently applied set of Women, Peace and Security-specific indicators. The absence of baseline data and an operational Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning framework at the midpoint of the National Action Plan cycle limits the ability of the Government and Parliament to assess whether interventions are delivering measurable improvements. In the context of Official Development Assistance cuts and reductions in staff and resourcing, this also represents poor value for money, as resources are not systematically tracked or assessed. (Conclusion, Paragraph 85)
18. As part of the Spring 2026 refresh of the National Action Plan, the Government must establish and publish a cross-government monitoring framework for Women, Peace and Security, including a clear and consistently applied set of Women, Peace and Security-specific indicators capable of assessing both outputs and impact. (Recommendation, Paragraph 86)
19. The Government must establish a biennial engagement mechanism with parliamentarians, civil society, and academic experts to review and refine National Action Plan indicators and reporting. Existing data on women's participation, lived experience, and programme impact must be

incorporated into the UK's monitoring framework, enabling meaningful oversight and accountability of Women, Peace and Security implementation. (Recommendation, Paragraph 87)

20. Given the Government's stated commitment to meaningful engagement, we consider it to be disappointing that a copy of the National Action Plan has not been shared with us in advance of publication. Earlier sharing would have strengthened transparency and supported effective parliamentary scrutiny. (Conclusion, Paragraph 88)
21. The Government has not allowed for sufficient external oversight and feedback on its Women, Peace and Security commitments. The shift from annual to biennial reporting has reduced opportunities for meaningful scrutiny. This weakens transparency and limits the ability of Parliament and civil society to assess whether commitments are delivering measurable improvements for women and girls. (Conclusion, Paragraph 94)
22. Backing the Women, Peace and Security Private Member's Bill would have been a significant demonstration of the Government's commitments to the agenda. However, the Government has indicated that it does not yet support it. We are concerned about the future of Women, Peace and Security and the extent of the Government's commitment and ability to deliver against National Action Plan objectives in the run up to the refresh. (Conclusion, Paragraph 95)
23. The Government must reinstate annual reporting to Parliament on Women, Peace and Security implementation following the 2026 National Action Plan refresh and commit to reporting which integrates progress on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, as set out in the Women, Peace and Security Bill. The Government must also review and reform the structure of engagement forums to strengthen opportunities for external scrutiny and accountability. (Recommendation, Paragraph 96)

Formal minutes

Tuesday 17 March 2026

Members present:

Sarah Champion, in the Chair

Janet Daby

Tracy Gilbert

Monica Harding

Brian Mathew

David Mundell

James Naish

Sam Rushworth

David Taylor

Peace under pressure: Protecting Women, Peace and Security

Draft Report (*Peace under pressure: Protecting Women, Peace and Security*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 96 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Tenth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

Adjournment

Adjourned till Tuesday 24 March at 1.30 p.m.

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Tuesday 14 October 2025

Hanin Ahmed, Sudanese Activist and Emergency Response Room Leader, Emergency Response Rooms, Sudan; **Stephanie Siddall**, Director of Global Policy and Advocacy, Women for Women International; **Fawzia Koofi**, Former Afghan politician and first female Deputy Speaker [Q1–21](#)

The Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, Former Government Minister, previous responsibilities included the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict (PSVI) 2017–2024; **Fiona Kilpatrick-Cooper**, Director of Weapons and Ammunition Management, The HALO Trust [Q22–42](#)

Tuesday 18 November 2025

Professor Toni Hastrup, Professor, The University of Manchester; **Reem Alsalem**, Special rapporteur on violence against women and girls, United Nations; **Eva Tabbasam**, Director, Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) [Q43–72](#)

Tuesday 16 December 2025

Chris Elmore MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office; **Alistair Carns DSO OBE MC MP**, Minister for Armed Forces, Ministry of Defence; **Stuart Mills**, Deputy Director Global Issues, Ministry of Defence; **Emily Maltman**, Head of Gender and Children in Conflict Department, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office [Q73–149](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

WPS numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

1	ActionAid UK	WPS0007
2	Afro Innovation Group	WPS0042
3	Age International	WPS0027
4	Ahmad, Dr Ayesha (Reader, City St George's University of London); and Reynolds, Dr Rodney (Research Fellow, University College London)	WPS0022
5	Burke, Sharon	WPS0012
6	Burke, Sharon	WPS0044
7	CARE International UK	WPS0038
8	Chapsos, Dr Ioannis (Assistant Professor, Coventry University); Malcolm, Dr James (Assistant Professor, Coventry University); McCabe, Dr Robert (Assistant Professor, Coventry University); and Fenton, Dr Adam (Assistant Professor, Coventry University)	WPS0001
9	Conciliation Resources	WPS0030
10	Efe, Dr Sureyya Sonmez (Senior Lecturer in Politics and International Relations, University of Lincoln)	WPS0009
11	Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office	WPS0015
12	Foreign Policy Centre	WPS0046
13	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Ministry of Defence	WPS0045
14	Frontline Youth Network	WPS0010
15	Gender Action for Peace and Security	WPS0014
16	Gizelis, Professor Theodora-Ismene (Professor, University of Essex); Khalifa, Ms Fareeda (PhD student, University of Essex); and Overton, Dr Iain (Executive Director , Action on Armed Violence)	WPS0002

17	Haastrup, Professor Toni (Professor & Chair in Global Politics, University of Manchester)	WPS0034
18	Hagen, Dr Jamie (Lecturer in Global Politics, University of Manchester)	WPS0035
19	Hashemi, Dr Ladan (Senior Lecturer, Senior Research Fellow, City St Georges' University of London); Aghtaie, Dr Nadia (Senior Lecturer, University of Bristol); and McManus, Professor Sally (Professor, City St Georges' University of London)	WPS0023
20	Heywood, Dr Emma (Senior Lecturer, University of Sheffield)	WPS0003
21	Holmes, Dr Georgina (Senior Lecturer in Politics and International Studies, The Open University); and McLeod, Dr Laura (Senior Lecturer in International Politics, University of Manchester)	WPS0033
22	Holt, Dr Maria (Emeritus Fellow, University of Westminster)	WPS0008
23	Ige-Olaobaju, Dr Adejoke (Senior Lecturer, Human Resource Management & Organisational Behaviour, University of Northampton); Abba Dabo, Dr Al-Amin (Senior Lecturer, Logistics And Supply Chain, University of Northampton); Vanger, Dr Emmanuel (Senior Lecturer, Project Management, University of Northampton); Adisa, Dr Olalekan (Senior Lecturer, Project Management, York St. John University); and Olayiwola Ganiyu, Dr Idris (Senior Lecturer, Human Resource Management & Organisational Behaviour, York St. John University)	WPS0013
24	Institute for Research into Superdiversity, University of Birmingham	WPS0026
25	International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)	WPS0019
26	Jhutti-Johal, Professor Jagbir (Professor of Sikh Studies, University of Birmingham)	WPS0021
27	Katharine, Dr (Senior Lecturer in International Politics, Newcastle University)	WPS0005
28	Kvinna till Kvinna (South Caucasus and Eastern Europe)	WPS0025
29	MAG (Mines Advisory Group)	WPS0031
30	Malaria No More UK	WPS0017
31	Martinescu, Andra-Lucia (Submitted with support from the Foreign Policy Centre)	WPS0041
32	Open Doors UK & Ireland	WPS0036
33	Queen Mary University of London	WPS0037

34	Roberts, Danielle (Doctoral Researcher, Ulster University)	<u>WPS0028</u>
35	The Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep)	<u>WPS0018</u>
36	Turner, Professor Catherine (Professor of Public International Law, Durham University)	<u>WPS0004</u>
37	United Against Malnutrition and Hunger	<u>WPS0016</u>
38	Westminster Foundation for Democracy	<u>WPS0024</u>
39	Women for Women International	<u>WPS0032</u>
40	Women's Policy Group NI	<u>WPS0029</u>
41	Women's Spaces Consortium	<u>WPS0040</u>
42	World Vision UK	<u>WPS0011</u>
43	Wright, Dr Katharine (Senior Lecturer, Newcastle University); Crory, Elaine (Women's Sector Lobbyist, Women's Resource and Development Agency); McAreavey, Professor Ruth (Professor of Sociology, Newcastle University); Monahan, Jonna (Director, Women's Platform); Partis-Jennings, Dr Hannah (Lecturer, Queen's University, Belfast); Tabbasam, Eva (Director, Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS)); and Turner, Professor Catherine (Professor of International Law, Durham University)	<u>WPS0006</u>

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Session 2024–26

Number	Title	Reference
9th	Future of UK aid and development assistance: interim report	HC 1330
8th	Empowering Development: Energy Access for Communities	HC 849
7th	Assessing Value, Ensuring Impact: The FCDO's Approach to Value for Money in Official Development Assistance	HC 422
6th	The FCDO's Approach to Displaced People	HC 525
5th	Protection not permission: The UK's role in upholding international humanitarian law and supporting the safe delivery of humanitarian aid	HC 526
4th	The 'In Development' process	HC 333
3rd	The Government's efforts to achieve SDG2: Zero Hunger	HC 515
2nd	Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory	HC 373
1st	Appointment of the Chief Commissioner of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact	HC 448
8th Special	Assessing Value, Ensuring Impact: The FCDO's Approach to Value for Money in Official Development Assistance: Government Response	HC 1669
7th Special	Empowering Development: Energy Access for Communities: Government response	HC 1626
6th Special	The FCDO's approach to displaced people: Government response	HC 1522

Number	Title	Reference
5th Special	Protection not permission: The UK's role in upholding international humanitarian law and supporting the safe delivery of humanitarian aid: Government Response	HC 1301
4th Special	The Government's efforts to achieve SDG2: Zero Hunger: Government Response	HC 923
3rd Special	Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Government Response	HC 797
2nd Special	The UK Small Island Developing States Strategy: Government Response	HC 597
1st Special	FCDO and disability-inclusive development: Government Response	HC 568