



HM Government

A Shared UK Government Approach to Gender in Syria

March 2018





“The UK is committed to placing women and girls at the heart of our work to respond to and resolve the conflict in Syria”

Minister Burt, Minister of State, Department for International Development and Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

A. What do we want to achieve for Women and Girls in Syria?

The purpose of this shared UK Government Approach to Gender in Syria is to ensure that we are using the full range of policy, diplomacy, and programmatic levers available to us. Since the beginning of the conflict gender inequality has increased in Syria; the UK has an opportunity to challenge this growing gender inequality.

By working together we are better able to transform the lives of women and girls inside Syria, now and into the future. This is both the right thing to do and the smart thing to do for a more stable Syria. Conversely, if we fail to include gender across our work, we will be in danger of missing the needs, failing to uphold the human rights, and failing to harness the capacity of 50% of the population. If we do not embed gender right across our work we risk inadvertently cementing the growing gender inequalities.

The UK has a number of gender-related policies that are highly relevant to Syria: Women Peace and Security (WPS), Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI), Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), Gender Equality. The UK Government has also signed up to a number of International Commitments which can only be achieved in Syria through a focus on gender, for instance: The Humanitarian Grand Bargain and the Sustainable Development Goals. The UK's Approach to Gender in Syria brings all these policies and commitments together, setting out an approach that will place women and girls at the heart of all we do to prevent and respond to the conflict in Syria. We will ensure that our interventions in Syria make a difference for women and girls immediately whilst laying the foundations for greater gender equality and better outcomes for women and girls into the future.

To deliver this, the UK will prioritise 3 Strategic Outcomes for the UK's gender focus in Syria. These 3 Strategic Outcomes work together to ensure that UK engagements, as a whole, promote gender equality, are empowering for women and girls and enable greater safety for women and girls.

Strategic Outcome 1: Programme and Policy Response

Women and girls have equal access to programme interventions alongside men and boys and are meaningfully included in all aspects of programming, policy influencing and international diplomacy.

Strategic Outcome 2: Decision-making

Women have a meaningful voice in the peace process and in peacebuilding discussions, empowering them to contribute to the future political transition in Syria. This includes formal and informal channels at all levels, local, national and international.

Strategic Outcome 3: Sexual and Gender Based Violence

Effective measures are in place to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence in Syria, particularly though not limited to, violence against women and girls.

B. Why do we need to prioritise Gender Equality in Syria?

There is strong evidence to show that tackling gender issues within conflict contexts such as Syria improves i) peace and stability outcomes; ii) humanitarian and poverty reduction outcomes; iii) security and radicalisation outcomes.

Peace and stability outcomes: The evidence demonstrates that meaningful inclusion of women in peacebuilding increases the probability of violence ending within a year by 24% and makes peace agreements 35% more likely to endure over 15 years. Yet between 1992 and 2011, 4% of signatories to peace agreements and less than 10 % of negotiators at peace tables are women. Similarly, there is a correlation between gender equality and stability.

Humanitarian need and poverty reduction outcomes: Women and girls can experience conflict differently to men and boys. They have differing needs and experience greater vulnerabilities that if unaddressed can lead to a spiral downwards into greater need and vulnerability. Conflict-affected contexts offer a vital window of opportunity to tackle gender-based inequalities. Tackling inequalities between women, men, boys and girls is critical for transforming longer-term development outcomes of women and girls once countries emerge from conflict. In tackling gender inequalities the root causes of sexual and gender-based violence are also addressed.

Security and radicalisation outcomes: Women and girls are often targeted by extremist groups, with sexual and gender based violence used as a tactic by those groups. Women also participate in violent extremism as well as in efforts to prevent it. The roles and specific needs of women and girls in relation to violent extremism has until now been overlooked.



C. Three UK Commitments to achieve change for Women and Girls in Syria:

- 1.** We will use UK programming in Syria to: contribute to wider gender equality; empower women and girls to have a voice and choice; and ensure women and girls are safe. We will adopt a set of Minimum Programme Standards on Gender applicable to all programming to achieve this.
- 2.** We will use our influencing levers to advocate for change for Syrian women and girls, taking opportunities to:
 - advocate for an end to sexual and gender based violence;
 - support women's political participation in peace discussions;
 - advocate for women and girls' needs to be fully addressed across the humanitarian effort and promote women's meaningful participation and leadership within the humanitarian effort;
- 3.** We will support the inclusion of women in the peace process at all levels. We will raise gender equality, women's participation and sexual and gender based violence in international fora in the context of the political peace process and the wider discussions.



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