



HM Government



HMG Response

20 February 2020

HMG Response to the Independent Commission for Aid Impact recommendations on: The UK's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative, January 2020

The Government welcomes the Independent Commission for Aid Impact's (ICAI) review of the FCO-led Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) and its recommendations. Independent scrutiny is important to ensure our policy and programming deliver maximum impact and value for money. The PSVI is an important element of our efforts to champion values and promote a Global Britain. The Government welcomes ICAI's acknowledgement that the PSVI has delivered an important body of work, including leading diplomatic efforts in an area neglected by the global community and in developing the International Protocol on Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict that was instrumental in securing convictions. This HMG response has been led by the FCO and the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict with input from DFID and MOD.

Rape and other forms of sexual violence continue to be used as weapons of war against women, men, and children. These crimes range from individual acts of brutality to deliberate torture and systematic campaigns of ethnic cleansing. We must strengthen justice for survivors and shatter the culture of impunity by bringing those responsible to justice, as well as finding practical ways to ensure that survivors feel confident to speak out, and are able to regain the dignity and rights that are due to them. We place the experiences of survivors at the heart of our work to understand the needs of those disproportionately affected by conflict and we seek to identify and mitigate the threats that face them. The scale of conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated against civilians is truly appalling and the world must take action to end this now.

The PSVI remains a top priority for the UK Government. We are the only government in the world to have a Prime Minister's Special Representative as well as a dedicated team and funding focused on tackling conflict-related sexual violence, including a PSVI Team of Experts that can be deployed to support specific contexts. The role of the Prime Minister's Special Representative has continued to be a ministerial appointment

since its creation in 2014. The UK drew global attention to the issues of rape and other conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) crimes in 2012 and remains a global leader on the issue, widely acknowledged by international partners and the United Nations. 156 UN Member States endorsed the UK-led 2013 UN Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict and, most recently, the UK successfully lobbied for UNSCR 2467 to include language on taking a survivor-centred approach. During his tenure as Foreign Secretary, the now Prime Minister was instrumental in galvanising the international community to establish the United Nations Investigative Team for the Accountability of Daesh (UNITAD). In July 2019, we announced an additional £1 million in direct funding to UNITAD to complement their existing work on providing psychosocial support to survivors.

The FCO continues to work with PSVI co-founders, former Foreign Secretary, Lord Hague, and UNHCR Special Envoy, Angelina Jolie, and the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. HRH The Countess of Wessex publicly committed to championing PSVI and our Women, Peace and Security work in March 2019, regularly hosting meetings and conducting overseas visits to progress the agenda, including a joint visit to Lebanon with Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon in June 2019.

Recommendation 1: The UK government should ensure that the important issue of preventing sexual violence in conflict is given an institutional home which enables both full oversight and direction, while also maximising the particular strengths and contributions of each participating department.

Partially Accept

HMG only partially accepts this recommendation. PSVI has always had an institutional home in the FCO. Since its creation, PSVI has been led by the FCO with support from DFID and the MOD. Our cross-government approach allows HMG to leverage maximum effect from respective areas of expertise, including through the overseas network, particularly where our DFID and MOD partners are co-located in countries where ending conflict-related sexual violence issues remains a priority. Key examples of cross-Whitehall collaboration include the WPS Working Group and the WPS Steering Committee, chaired by the FCO minister responsible for WPS, both of which cover PSVI, and our joined up approach to planning for the 2020 FCO-led PSVI International Conference.

HMG work on PSVI is led by the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict and governed by our cross-Government National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security, specifically the strategic outcome on gender-based violence, as well as being incorporated into other strategic outcomes such as security and justice, peacekeeping and building our national capacity. The PSVI wider strategic context is also articulated in the FCO's departmental priorities set out in its Single Departmental Plan as well as in MOD and DFID documents.

HMG recognises the need for improved oversight and strategic direction. The FCO will lead the development of a three-year strategy with input from DFID and the MOD, and programme learnings from the Conflict Stability and Security Fund

(CSSF), drawing on each departments' comparative advantage. This will strengthen the Theory of Change and monitoring, evaluation and learning. We will continue to improve strategic plans to support all departments working on PSVI, ensuring a survivor-centred approach to UK Government work on conflict-related sexual violence.

Recommendation 2: The UK government should ensure that its programming activities on preventing sexual violence in conflict are embedded within a structure that supports effective design, monitoring and evaluation, and enables long-term impact.

Accept

PSVI programmes follow the Government's agreed standards and receive robust scrutiny to ensure that all spending represents value for money for UK taxpayers, and advances the UN's sustainable development goals and our foreign policy objectives. This includes HMG's monitoring and evaluation good practice tailored to what is most appropriate for the context and the partners with whom we work.

At a minimum, FCO PSVI programmes report quarterly to the relevant departmental budget holder on delivery and on completion of activity. Programme impact on delivery of policy objectives is further evaluated e.g. in impact reporting produced by individual teams. All three departments delivering PSVI are committed to continuing to improve our programme delivery standards and will ensure lessons are learned from ICAI's review of PSVI projects.

FCO PSVI funding moved to a two-year programming cycle between 2018/19 and 2019/20 to allow for more strategic programming although individual projects were contracted for one financial year. Due to the nature of the FCO's funding cycle, programme allocations in 2020/21 will again be for a one-year cycle, in line with the outcome of the 2019 Spending Round. We will keep the future funding cycle under review as the 2020 Spending Review progresses. The CSSF has funded various multi-year PSVI projects.

Recommendation 3: The UK government should ensure that its work on preventing conflict-related sexual violence is founded on survivor-led design, which has clear protocols in place founded in 'do no harm' principles.

Accept

PSVI has always been committed to ensuring a survivor-centred approach to tackling conflict-related sexual violence. Survivors are an integral part of PSVI policy and programming development and we uphold the Do No Harm principle, based on departmental guidance. For example, survivors actively participated in consultations for the development of the 2014 International Protocol on Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict, the 2017 Principles for Global Action on tackling the stigma of sexual violence in conflict, and the current development of an international accountability centre and the Murad Code. The Murad Code will complement the work of UNITAD in gathering evidence of Daesh crimes in Iraq and will seek to provide further guidance and support on evidence gathering.

We have funded organisations supporting survivors since 2012 and launched the 2017 Principles for Global Action on tackling the stigma of sexual violence in conflict. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the UK has funded TRIAL to conduct advocacy and targeted legal support to open up access to compensation for survivors, which resulted in the first successful compensation case and led to an historic United Nations Committee against Torture (CAT) ruling on states' obligations towards survivors of sexual violence. The UK has supported training in BiH and Kosovo to build the capacity of civil society, prosecutors and judges on CRSV cases. We appointed two PSVI Survivor Champions in October 2019 who work with us on PSVI policy and programme design, in addition to a wide range of survivor groups, including those led by Nobel Laureates Dr Mukwege and Nadia Murad. Survivors have been represented on the PSVI Steering Group since its creation.

As part of our commitment to a survivor-centred approach, we will continue to regularly review and improve our current design processes for PSVI-related programming to ensure they are both inclusive and effective.

Recommendation 4: The UK government should build a systematic learning process into its programming to support the generation of evidence of what works in addressing conflict-related sexual violence and ensure effective dissemination and uptake across its portfolio of activities.

Accept

In ICAI's "How UK Aid Learns" report, ICAI acknowledged the progress Departments made in building up their aid management capabilities and that Departments' investments in learning are broadly commensurate with the size and complexity of their aid budgets.

We work closely with academics and civil society organisations, including through our PSVI and WPS working groups, to help develop effective policy against our policy objectives. PSVI has commissioned research projects into specific areas on conflict-related sexual violence including children born of sexual violence, and a paper outlining ways to strengthen justice for survivors of sexual violence in conflict which is helping to inform the development of an international centre to promote accountability for conflict-related sexual violence. This was the basis for a Wilton Park conference on the subject where a broad cross-section of stakeholders agreed recommendations for next steps.

A significant amount of our learning is shared on an informal basis across government departments through cross-Whitehall workshops, most recently on children born of conflict-related sexual violence, and regularly contributing to information sessions run by the Gender Equality Unit. The PSVI Team of Experts are required to provide reports post-deployment that the PSVI team use to inform future policy and programming.

DFID's flagship 'What Works to Prevent Violence' research and innovation programme (2013-20) has generated ground-breaking evidence on the most effective interventions to prevent violence, including conflict-related sexual violence.

DFID shared the evidence with the FCO and MOD, and used it to inform cross-government initiatives such as the Gender Based Violence theory of change.

DFID's £67.5 million 'What Works' successor programme, announced in November 2019, will generate evidence on prevention of violence against women and girls, including conflict-related sexual violence. It will support the use of this evidence across HMG and by international partners to inform a more effective, scaled up global response. The programme represents the largest investment by any single government donor in preventing such violence globally.

HMG recognises there are further improvements that can be made on PSVI learning processes. We are considering ways to ensure more systematic lesson learning to ending conflict-related sexual violence and improved learning will support this.