

## **Response to ActionAid's Fearless campaign to end violence against women and girls**

Thank you for contacting DFID about ActionAid's "Fearless" campaign to end violence against women and girls (VAWG).

Ending violence against women and girls is a top priority for the Department for International Development, and I am proud of the leadership that the UK has shown on tackling VAWG globally.

In the past two years, we have hosted the Call to Action on protecting women and girls in emergencies; the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict; and the ground-breaking Girl Summit to end Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and child, early and forced marriage (CEFM).

Since 2012, there has been a 63% increase in DFID programming to address VAWG to 109 programmes in total, 19 of which focus entirely on VAWG. Our £35million programme to tackle FGM – the largest of any individual country – is helping to reduce the practice by 30% in 17 countries across Africa, and our £36million programme to end Child, Early and Forced Marriage is helping thousands of girls escape losing any choice or control over their future. A further significant investment we have made is in a landmark £25million research programme, looking at what works to prevent VAWG, particularly in conflict situations.

We know that to prevent VAWG we need to examine the deep-seated attitudes and social norms that allow such violence to exist. We recognise the importance of working with women's organisations on this and on other deep-rooted causes of VAWG. For example, following the Girl Summit last year, the Secretary of State announced £8million to support AmplifyChange, an initiative that supports civil society activists in their work to end CEFM and FGM and to address a broader range of associated gender issues.

We are focused on ensuring that these commitments in programming are delivered as effectively as possible, as well as focusing on working with others to get further commitments (both financial and political) to end VAWG globally.

The UK will continue to champion the standalone gender goal and the target on VAWG, FGM and CEFM included in the outcome document of the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals. We will continue to push for a strong and explicit commitment in the post-2015 framework that will be agreed later this year.

I welcome ActionAid's commitment to addressing VAWG. The UK is already a global leader on prioritising girls and women, including tackling VAWG, and we will continue to pursue an ambitious agenda in this area.

**BARONESS VERMA**