

BRIEFING | OCTOBER 2022

Scaling up insecurity? Risks of the UK's persistent engagement strategy in Kenya and Somalia

The *Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy* has signalled a larger UK military presence in the Horn of Africa. It proposes a 'persistent engagement strategy', which will see 'armed forces overseas more often and for longer periods of time, to train, exercise and operate alongside allies and partners across all our priority regions'.¹ Alongside this, the 2021 Defence Command paper, *Defence in a competitive age*, 'recognise[d] the strategic importance of East Africa to UK interests', stating: 'We plan to increase our military presence in Kenya, bolstering our networks with a British Defence Staff and regional hub.'²

Together with Burundi and Uganda, Kenya is one of the biggest contributors of troops to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS).³ After 15 years, the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) was replaced with ATMIS through a United Nations (UN) Security Council resolution passed in early 2022. The text of the resolution sets out strategies for how responsibility for the country's security will be assumed by Somalia's army and police force by the end of 2024.⁴ The UK's Defence Command paper has signalled that the UK military intends to be an important player in this transition, stating: 'We will continue to support a stronger and more stable Somalia; provide trainers and advisers to the Somali National Army and liaison officers to [ATMIS] and the UN missions.'⁵

This briefing aims to investigate what role, if any, the announced increase in UK military presence should and could play in the Horn of Africa (and especially Kenya and Somalia). To do so, we interviewed civil society members from Somalia and Kenya, along with independent researchers, human rights activists, UK soldiers, officials and security consultants based in the region.⁶

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The UK's support to the region is not just through the military. For instance, the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) is a leading contributor to the Somalia Stability Fund (SSF), 'a multi-donor programme working towards a peaceful, secure, and stable Somalia ... [which] offers Somali stakeholders a source of multi-year funding that can respond to local needs and opportunities that contribute to stability in Somalia'.⁷ However, it is worth considering what sending additional military forces to the region may mean, and what risks it could carry for these wider objectives.

The UK and other allies have poured military training and equipment into Somalia (including through their regional partners), alongside military interventions by Special Forces and drone strikes (in the case of the US). These have, at times, failed to address – and have even exacerbated – violent conflict, weak and predatory state institutions, poor services and widespread corruption.⁸

Many of those interviewed for this research warned against any further military intervention at all, stating that more could be achieved with a greater investment in diplomatic and development efforts. However, this briefing takes the view that, if the military is already going to be deployed, then it is important to understand how to mitigate risks and maximise the good it could do.

This briefing does not provide an extensive review of all UK activity in the Horn of Africa. Instead, it highlights three areas for the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) to consider when deciding how to scale up its forces in Somalia and Kenya:

1. **Improve training:** there must consistently be a people-centred, rights-based approach to training which acknowledges the links between gender, violence and conflict.
2. **Align strategy:** any military deployment must be framed within a development-led civilian strategy for sustainable peace, with a focus on addressing the root causes of conflict and a recognition that military activity alone will not lead to peace and stability.
3. **Increase transparency:** the UK Government must also be transparent about military deployments, with meaningful parliamentary oversight and accountability.

The briefing explores each of these areas, drawing on previous work by the authors, as well as Saferworld's extensive research and programming experience in the region.



A woman soldier of the Somali National Army (SNA) sits during a passing-out ceremony marking the conclusion of a training course conducted by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

Focusing on people-centred training

The UK military has a wealth of expertise in developing and delivering training in the Horn of Africa, and has continued to improve its offer to its partners in the region.⁹ However, this training fails to be driven by the needs of people in conflict-affected communities. Practical, context-specific training with scenarios would better prepare partners for the unique challenges of operating in Somalia; for example, how to respond if they get ambushed by al-Shabaab in a densely populated location; how to handle potentially violent protests; how to treat prisoners of war; and how to treat journalists and other protected groups.

Likewise, military forces should know how to act when harm has occurred. This could include efforts such as establishing safe and effective civilian harm reporting mechanisms, conducting investigations into civilian harm allegations, and the provision of remedies to victims and their relatives. Harm could also be related to gender-based violence (GBV) and, as such, specific training should also focus on how to assist GBV survivors – such as providing information on safe and accessible GBV services in the area. Training must also emphasise accountability for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. As a starting point, military trainers can consult various recommendations and approaches proposed by civilian protection and human rights groups such as Amnesty International,¹⁰ Human Rights Watch,¹¹ PAX,¹² Saferworld, and the Center for Civilians in Conflict,¹³ among others.

External forces could improve their engagement by placing those most affected by conflict at the centre of their approach. Unfortunately, many of those we interviewed for this briefing did not feel that this was happening. One interviewee said that “the West is pushing for things civilians don’t want”.¹⁴ Another said, “the international community’s approach has failed due to [a] lack of understanding of the needs and priorities of Somalia’s local communities”.¹⁵ This is particularly true with regards to women and girls, whose needs and concerns are often ignored because they are usually not part of decision-making spaces. Any training should therefore incorporate the meaningful participation of women and girls from conflict-affected contexts into their design.¹⁶

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Better engagement with conflict-affected communities could shape training and wider initiatives from the MoD into something more useful for peace and stability in the region. As has been well documented elsewhere, people affected by conflict often have the most effective and sustainable solutions for addressing its drivers.¹⁷ Their views are vital for informing what works, highlighting the ways in which women, young people and marginalised groups experience conflict and post-conflict situations, and avoiding reinforcing existing inequalities.¹⁸ The UK Government recently acknowledged this when it said in its strategy for international development that ‘[t]he difficult reforms and good policies that drive progress must be locally owned’.¹⁹ It also acknowledged the need to address specific concerns from women and girls and to ‘lead globally on women, peace and security’.

It is promising to hear that the British Peace Support Team (BPST) in Kenya has recognised the importance of training on gender and gender equality;²⁰ however, this training must be founded on a good understanding of the working context. Such training should provide in-depth knowledge of gender as a concept and its links to conflict and violence. It should help provide a sense of how gender norms fuel conflict, including through harmful masculinities,²¹ and the impacts of conflict on women, girls, and sexual and gender minorities, as well as on the types of interventions that can effectively avoid harm and prevent the reinforcement of gender inequalities and discrimination. These are all dynamics that the UK Integrated Review seeks to address and which the UK commits to in its National Action Plan.²²

Police Advisory Committees (PACs), established in Somalia and supported by Saferworld and our partners, provide a practical example of a mechanism for placing people impacted by conflict at the centre. The mandate of the PACs includes improving community–police relations, monitoring prison conditions and providing services to detainees. They have also ‘provided training to police and custodial personnel on police accountability and civil oversight mechanisms, emphasising gender and conflict sensitivity and human rights’.²³ The Head of Community Policing and Public Relations for the Somali Police Force stated: ‘[The PAC] advise the police... If the PAC notices something that is not right with the police, they make them aware and the police stop the wrong things they were doing, like not allowing relatives of offenders to visit them or call them, and labelling suspects as criminals before they are found guilty by a court of law, and many other things that violate the human rights of suspects. The PAC have helped the police to stop these and many mistakes they used to make in the past.’²⁴

Kenyan Army engineers and US Army Staff Sergeant Robert Benton discuss techniques used during a civil affairs field training exercise in Embakasi, Kenya.

© US Army



Considered engagement with conflict-affected communities could improve our understanding of how some of the most vulnerable people in society experience conflict differently. Conflict has exacerbated sexual violence against women and girls in Somalia, which often goes unreported due to stigma and fear among survivors.²⁵ African Union (AU) troops, particularly those from Uganda and Burundi, have been accused of sexual abuse and exploitation of women and girls in their bases in Mogadishu.²⁶ The soldiers allegedly used money, food and medicine provided via humanitarian assistance to coerce vulnerable women and girls into sex.²⁷

As well as conflict, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and climatic shocks have left women and girls more vulnerable.²⁸ In particular, women and girls in displaced communities face sexual violence, cycles of forced evictions, dire living conditions and limited access to basic services.²⁹ Due to the unequal responsibilities placed on women by society, especially during extreme climate events, they face travelling long distances to fetch water and firewood and to locate pasture, which again puts them at a heightened risk of sexual violence and abuse.³⁰ It is therefore encouraging that the UK is investing in gender-based training through the BPST. Dealing with the full and complex picture, however, requires investment in understanding the specific needs of people impacted by conflict. For example, it is

important for women and girls to feel safe raising their concerns; this might require supporting women-only spaces, for instance.

Improved engagement with conflict-affected communities would also enhance the UK's persistent engagement strategy, which explicitly focuses on building UK influence abroad. The UK is not alone in scaling up in the Horn of Africa. Other countries, such as the US,³¹ China,³² Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar have all also signalled a desire to play a more active role in Somalia and its neighbouring countries.³³ Many officials and soldiers spoke of the 'UK's brand' as something that was still appealing to forces in the region, even as countries like China and Turkey step up their presence. Others were more sceptical about an approach that, they argued, preached values but didn't always live up to them.³⁴ One Kenyan expert said, "training or aid from the UK/US always comes with a lecture on human rights".³⁵ On the comparison with China, one Somali expert noted that, "You can't eat values. You can't change societies by importing values but you can by improving everyone's lot with infrastructure."³⁶ These views are not universal across Kenya and Somalia; however, they reveal the importance of understanding what people in Kenya and Somalia actually think of UK deployments, and adapting training accordingly.

Avoiding a 'military first' strategy

So far, the UK – and especially the FCDO – has attempted to pursue a comprehensive, long term strategy in the Horn of Africa. For instance, its investment in the SSF is aimed at 'support[ing] enhanced government legitimacy and reduced political and communal conflict...; enhancing popular participation in governance particularly for women and marginalised groups; and addressing structural drivers of conflict and instability at the political and communal level'.³⁷

Our interviews highlighted the importance of many of these factors. A number of interviewees pointed out that more and more Somalis are relying on al-Shabaab courts for dispute resolution.³⁸ This diminishes the legitimacy of federal and regional government institutions. Communities tend to think al-Shabaab's justice system is expeditious and fair compared to the government's "weak and corrupt system". Civil society members we interviewed also believe that there is a correlation between weak government institutions, a lack of access to justice, impunity for human rights violations, and the overall lack of improvement of security in the country.³⁹

More needs to be done to build the judiciary as an institution, to combat corruption in the justice sector and to end impunity for human rights violations. "Building the judiciary will minimise the reliance on the al-Shabaab justice system and will strengthen the legitimacy of the federal judiciary," said one Somali human rights defender. "A stable country maintains social safety through institutions such as financial, educational, judicial, legislative and administrative," they added.⁴⁰

A number of local and international organisations are also looking at ways to address this. Alternative Dispute Resolution centres improve the availability and accessibility of justice,⁴¹ while the American Bar Association's Expanding Access to Justice programme seeks to achieve lasting improvements in access to justice and mechanisms to address grievances for stability in Somalia.⁴²

However, a major concern from this research (and of many that we interviewed) is the risk that adding more military forces to an already militarised context may have the potential to undermine – rather than support – these objectives. As one Somali expert said, it could just "add more violence".⁴³ Certainly, over the last two decades, states and intergovernmental organisations – including the US, UK, European Union (EU), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and UN – have undertaken campaigns to enhance the institutional and security capacities of states to counter violent non-state groups, promote security and stability, and curb migration.⁴⁴ In many areas around the world, such campaigns have repeatedly failed to reduce violence, improve governance

or build sustainable peace. Studies in places like Syria,⁴⁵ the Sahel,⁴⁶ Yemen⁴⁷ and Afghanistan⁴⁸ have shown that over-reliance on military force fails to address complex conflict dynamics and drivers, and risks exacerbating instability and insecurity.

This is no different in the Horn of Africa, where civilians are bearing the brunt of conflict.⁴⁹ In Somalia, according to the UN, there were 428 civilian casualties (167 killed and 261 injured) between February and May 2022 alone. Seventy-six per cent were the result of indiscriminate attacks by the armed group al-Shabaab, while the rest were attributed to state security forces, clan militias, and international and regional forces.⁵⁰

The Oxford Research Group's (ORG) Remote Warfare Programme (which joined Saferworld in August 2020)⁵¹ raised concerns about the continued work that needs to be done to both improve coordination between departments and mitigate the risks that a military deployment might undermine the larger political strategy. Abigail Watson and Megan Karshøj-Pedersen write: "While progress has been made... there remain problems in bridging the different languages, cultures, and planning processes across departments."⁵² Differences in the length of planning cycles, for instance, often meant that the MoD had developed a strategy long before other departments – leading to frustration from the MoD as it waited for others to catch up, and from other departments who felt they were being dictated to by the MoD.

In Kenya and Somalia, there could be serious consequences to not fully aligning departmental strategies; for example, in continuing to strengthen security forces that lack legitimacy among the people they are meant to protect. In late 2021, a six-member board of inquiry convened by AMISOM confirmed that AU troops were responsible for killing seven civilians in Golweyn town, in the Lower Shabelle region of Somalia.⁵³ In May 2020, eight health workers were abducted and killed by armed men dressed in Somali military and police uniforms in Gololey village, Middle Shabelle region.⁵⁴ The identities of these individuals were not confirmed but these cases demonstrate that security forces in the region commit violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law and there is therefore a significant risk that UK-trained forces may do so. Authorities in Somalia appointed a committee to investigate the 2020 incident, but the findings have so far not been made public and no perpetrators have been brought to justice.⁵⁵

In fact, victims and their family members rarely get justice for these abuses – there is a widespread culture of impunity for human rights violations. In the case of GBV, this is aggravated by the fact that many

cases go unreported due to fear of stigmatisation or a lack of trust in the justice system. This works counter to the stated objective of the UK Government (as well as that of Somalia) of enhancing governance and economic development and addressing the root causes of instability, as well as mitigating violence and discrimination against women and girls.⁵⁶ People feel aggrieved and excluded, and often try to find alternative means of getting justice, or they become vulnerable to being recruited and exploited by armed groups. A recent Human Rights Watch report found that 'a culture of impunity for civilian loss breeds resentment and mistrust among the population and undermines efforts to build a more rights-respecting state'.⁵⁷

It is important to note that GBV is also present inside the UK Armed Forces, and allegedly more than two-thirds of women in the armed forces have experienced bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination.⁵⁸ Many of those affected do not issue a complaint, because they think that either nothing will be done or that it could negatively affect their careers.⁵⁹ Clearly, there is a need to tackle problems internal to the UK Armed Forces, alongside working to mitigate abuses by external forces.

In the case of Kenya, human rights groups have reported that Kenyan security forces have committed human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances during counter-terrorism operations.⁶⁰ These alleged acts mainly targeted Muslim communities in the northeast and coastal regions of the country.⁶¹ One Somali expert said of the Kenyan security forces: "How do they distinguish between Somalis and al-Shabaab? To them we are all the same."⁶² Another said, "Somalis in the north of Kenya are between a rock and a hard place: [they] are subject to robbery and violence by al-Shabaab, but when they go to Kenyan police, they are not helped, instead they are treated poorly, profiled and sometimes accused of being al-Shabaab themselves."⁶³ Since 2011, Kenya Defence Forces have conducted military forays in the Middle Juba, Lower Juba and Gedo regions of Somalia. The Kenya Defence Forces have also received numerous allegations of human rights violations over the years,⁶⁴ some resulting from airstrikes.⁶⁵ Civilian deaths caused by AMISOM and others in their fight against al-Shabaab are turning many Somalis against them. Indeed, a decade after AMISOM first intervened, with millions of pounds invested in the military capability of the Somali National Army (SNA), al-Shabaab remains deeply entrenched in Somalia.⁶⁶

Many of the interviewees believed that violence against people in these regions was driving recruitment by al-Shabaab. One Somali expert said, "violence against those who hold extreme views makes them violent".⁶⁷ Another expert based in Kenya noted that "al-Shabaab uses police brutality in Kenya to recruit people".⁶⁸ This reflected concerns raised by UK soldiers training SNA members in 2019. One said that the SNA was one of the biggest recruitment tools for al-Shabaab because

"they steal, rape, etc., same as others, but this time in uniform, with Somali flags on it".⁶⁹ This cycle of violence is not inevitable: Saferworld's 2017 study, *'Inside Kenya's war on terror: breaking the cycle of violence in Garissa'*, describes how, amid the aftershocks from the horrific Garissa University College attack in 2015, public solidarity and political pressure translated into new political, security and societal action to stem a rising tide of violence and increase trust.⁷⁰ However, millions of dollars and years of investment later, these local successes remain a rarity.

Despite the long-standing heavy military intervention by different actors including the US, the AU and the EU, al-Shabaab still remains a threat, not only to Somalia but also to its neighbouring countries and beyond.⁷¹ For instance, the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) told the US Department of Defense Office of Inspector General that al-Shabaab 'remains adaptive, resilient, and capable of attacking Western and partner interests in Somalia and East Africa'.⁷² On 4 May 2022, at least 30 Burundian soldiers were killed and 20 others wounded by al-Shabaab in an attack in the village of El-Baraf.⁷³ This was one of the biggest attacks since 2015 and the first on ATMIS since it replaced AMISOM. The armed group controls large swathes of south-central Somalia.⁷⁴ It carries out sporadic targeted attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure in the capital, Mogadishu, and other towns under the control of government or allied forces.

The ORG and others have argued that such risks highlight the need to build robust conditionality into UK support. Liam Walpole and Megan Karlshøj-Pedersen argue that 'applying a rigorous approach to abuses from partner forces will likely strengthen Britain's international reputation because it will show that the UK leads by example when it comes to keeping civilians safe and respecting international law'.⁷⁵ The Somali Journalists Syndicate and Somali Media Association accused the UK (and Germany) of supporting forces that raided a media house in Beled Weyn, Hiran region. In response, the UK Embassy seemed willing to suspend its support depending on the outcome of the investigation.⁷⁶ Consistently showing this willingness to act will go a long way to addressing the sense of impunity among security forces, and will build the legitimacy of those the UK trains – in line with UK objectives more broadly.

More generally, this consistency would come from military training being determined by a development-led strategy from the FCDO, which in turn should align with a locally led strategy for sustainable peace. Delivering on the objectives of, for instance, the SSF requires all of the UK's interventions in Kenya, Somalia and the wider region to be focused on these goals (and on halting or reconsidering military efforts when they could be counter-productive).



Women military and police officers from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Somali Security Forces attend a Female Engagement Team (FET) training organised by the AMISOM and UK Mission Support Team in Mogadishu, Somalia.

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Being transparent about military deployments

Interviews highlighted that a number of Somalis and Kenyans are sceptical about international partners' intentions in their region. For some, the war in Somalia was "created by the West and now the Africans are being used in games of geopolitics".⁷⁷ For others, intervening parties have more interest in "competing for resources (oil, gas, fishing, etc.)" or in "want[ing] to have military bases and presence in the country" than ending the suffering of Somalis.⁷⁸ One interviewee said that Somalis "only hear negative things about foreign troops". Some were especially worried about the UK, including one who said, "there is a belief that the UK does what it wants in Kenya. There have recently been growing concerns and questions about how – if at all – Kenya benefits from UK activities in Kenya."⁷⁹

The death of a Kenyan woman, Agnes Wanjiru, who was allegedly killed by a British soldier, has not helped the UK's standing in Kenya or internationally. Efforts by the MoD to shut down discussions of the story only worsened the UK's reputation, and the suffering of the

victim's family. One interviewee argued for "clear and comprehensible communication... for local communities so that they know and understand why these forces are here and what they are doing".⁸⁰ Many UK officials – in this research and in past conversations – have expressed frustration that the lack of transparency prevents the government's ability to set its own narrative for British military action overseas, while potentially fuelling popular feelings of distrust in government.⁸¹ In fact, this risk was acknowledged in the UK's own *Strategic Defence and Security Review*, which stated: "We must expect intense scrutiny of our operations by a more transparent society, informed by the speed and range of modern global communications. Our enemies will continue to attack our physical and electronic lines of communication. And the growth of communications technology will increase our enemies' ability to influence, not only all those on the battlefield, but also our own society directly. We must therefore win the battle for information, as well as the battle on the ground."⁸²

Serious allegations of human rights and international humanitarian law violations by members of the UK Armed Forces overseas have increased calls for meaningful parliamentary oversight over defence and security policy and action. Currently, procedures for parliamentary scrutiny and oversight have failed to keep up with the changing character of military interventions. Members of Parliament (MPs) from across the political spectrum have raised concerns about Parliament's inability to provide meaningful oversight and accountability of the UK's growing military capabilities and commitments,⁸³ as have parliamentary committees⁸⁴ and interest groups.⁸⁵

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 While parliamentary committees have a long history of overseeing British action abroad, a number have expressed concern over their ability to scrutinise contemporary conflicts, particularly those involving Special Forces. In March 2016, a leaked memo revealed that Jordanian leader King Abdullah was ready to send troops to attack al-Shabaab in Somalia, joining British and Kenyan forces. In April 2016, a report emerged detailing how UK Special Forces had been training local soldiers on how to fight al-Shabaab from a camp just north of the capital Mogadishu.⁸⁶ In February 2017, a report on US special operations in Kenya's Boni National Reserve on the border with Somalia claimed that there had been British (and other allied) intelligence and special forces support.⁸⁷ None of these allegations were properly discussed due to the government's long-held blanket opacity policy, which precludes any form of external oversight of UK Special Forces. Information about their activities is also specifically exempt from the Freedom of Information Act.⁸⁸

Similarly, the government's decision not to designate train and assist operations as 'combat missions' – despite the lack of an official definition of, or a set list of criteria for, combat and non-combat operations – has left these operations devoid of oversight.⁸⁹ As explored

earlier, in Somalia these deployments are not free from risk. In a Saferworld study of UK-delivered security force assistance, Lewis Brooks explored one incident where security forces in Somalia violently clashed with protestors gathered in Baidoa, the capital of South West State.⁹⁰ An investigation found no link between UK-trained units and these forces; however, the incident shows that the UK was aware of the potential risks. In 2018, ORG cited an example of US forces being manipulated by local partners and their support exploited to settle local scores.⁹¹

The UK's persistent engagement strategy – and the indications that it will see an increased UK military presence in the Horn of Africa – makes mitigating these risks through proper oversight of these engagements more important than ever. The need for meaningful scrutiny has been raised in recent years as growing evidence of abuses conducted by UK partners and Special Forces surfaces.⁹² In 2019, the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee recommended that MPs should have access to all but the most sensitive information about UK military deployments.⁹³ This, it said, was to ensure effective scrutiny of government policy and decision-making.⁹⁴

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 We have highlighted the importance of consultative, informed policy and decision-making throughout this briefing. The lack of information about, and scrutiny of, the UK's activities in Kenya and Somalia has risked undermining its core aims, and has caused reputational damage among people in these communities. As the UK deploys its new strategies in the Horn of Africa, often through training missions (and potentially through Special Forces), it is essential that it considers some of the hard-learned lessons from recent campaigns and improves the transparency surrounding its strategy – both for those in the region and for Parliament back home.



ATMIS and Somali National Army officers receive training on countering explosives, Mogadishu, Somalia.

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Fardosa Hussein

Conclusion: Scaling up better

In the course of this research, it was striking how often the deployment of military forces undermined political strategies and exacerbated the drivers of conflict. In the face of such evidence, it is worth asking whether additional UK forces should be deployed at all to Kenya and Somalia – and whether instead a greater investment could be made in diplomatic and development efforts. Given the reality of deployment however, the briefing highlighted three key areas to consider when attempting to understand how to mitigate the potential risks of scaling up UK operations, and potentially even maximise possible opportunities.

Firstly, training requires innovation. While the British Peace Support Team and others have extensive experience in developing and delivering training, they should also:

- do more to deliver tailor-made, scenario-based training for the particular problems faced in different parts of Somalia
- ensure that any training considers not just how to prevent harm, but also what to do when harm occurs; when doing so, military trainers can consult various recommendations and approaches proposed by civilian protection and human rights groups including Amnesty International,⁹⁵ Human Rights Watch,⁹⁶ PAX,⁹⁷ Saferworld and the Center for Civilians in Conflict,⁹⁸ among others
- place people affected by conflict at the centre of design, planning and implementation when considering how to innovate training, to ensure the UK is truly responding to their needs (initiatives such as the PACs in Somalia provide useful templates for this)
- incorporate gender, including GBV and gender equality, into training courses

Secondly, deploying military forces to or strengthening the capacity of security forces in Kenya and Somalia poses risks to broader political objectives in the region. This is particularly the case given the potential that UK-supported forces could commit abuses or engage in misconduct. For the MoD, this means it needs to consider:

- how it can ensure that any additional military deployments reinforce and are driven by a development-led civilian strategy for sustainable peace, set by the FCDO (this may require patience from MoD personnel in waiting for strategic direction)
- the particular risks of potentially supporting security forces that commit abuses; as well as our recommended potential changes to training noted above, there is a need to acknowledge when training could risk the UK's political strategy (and be willing to stop support when it does)

For the wider UK efforts, mitigating these risks will require more investment in building Kenyan and Somali judiciaries, to combat corruption in the justice sector and to end impunity for human rights violations.

Thirdly, and finally, in implementing the above changes and improving the impact of UK military deployments, a dialogue with the UK Parliament is essential.

This means:

- releasing public summaries of National Security Council or Integrated Review implementation strategies for priority countries and themes
- releasing timely, accurate and gender-sensitive information on 'non-combat' operations
- re-evaluating the 'no comment' policy over UK Special Forces

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- 15 Saferworld interview, Abdalle Ahmed Mumin, Secretary General, Somali Journalists Syndicate, Mogadishu, 4 June 2022.
- 16 Engagement with civil society should be meaningful. The Beyond Consultations tool can provide useful information and practical steps on how to meaningfully consult civil society, and particularly women and girls: www.beyondconsultations.org
- 17 Baron A (2018), 'The Marib Paradox: How One Province Succeeds in the Midst of Yemen's War', European Council on Foreign Relations, June (https://ecfr.eu/archive/page/-/ECFR-261_the_marib_paradox_how_one_province_succeeds_in_the_midst_of_yemens_war.pdf)
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About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent, not-for-profit international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives in countries and territories across Africa, Asia and the Middle East. We work in solidarity with people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe in a world where everyone can lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from fear and insecurity.

Cover photo: Kenyan Defence Force personnel serving under the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) visit El-Adde in the southwestern Gedo region of Somalia.

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